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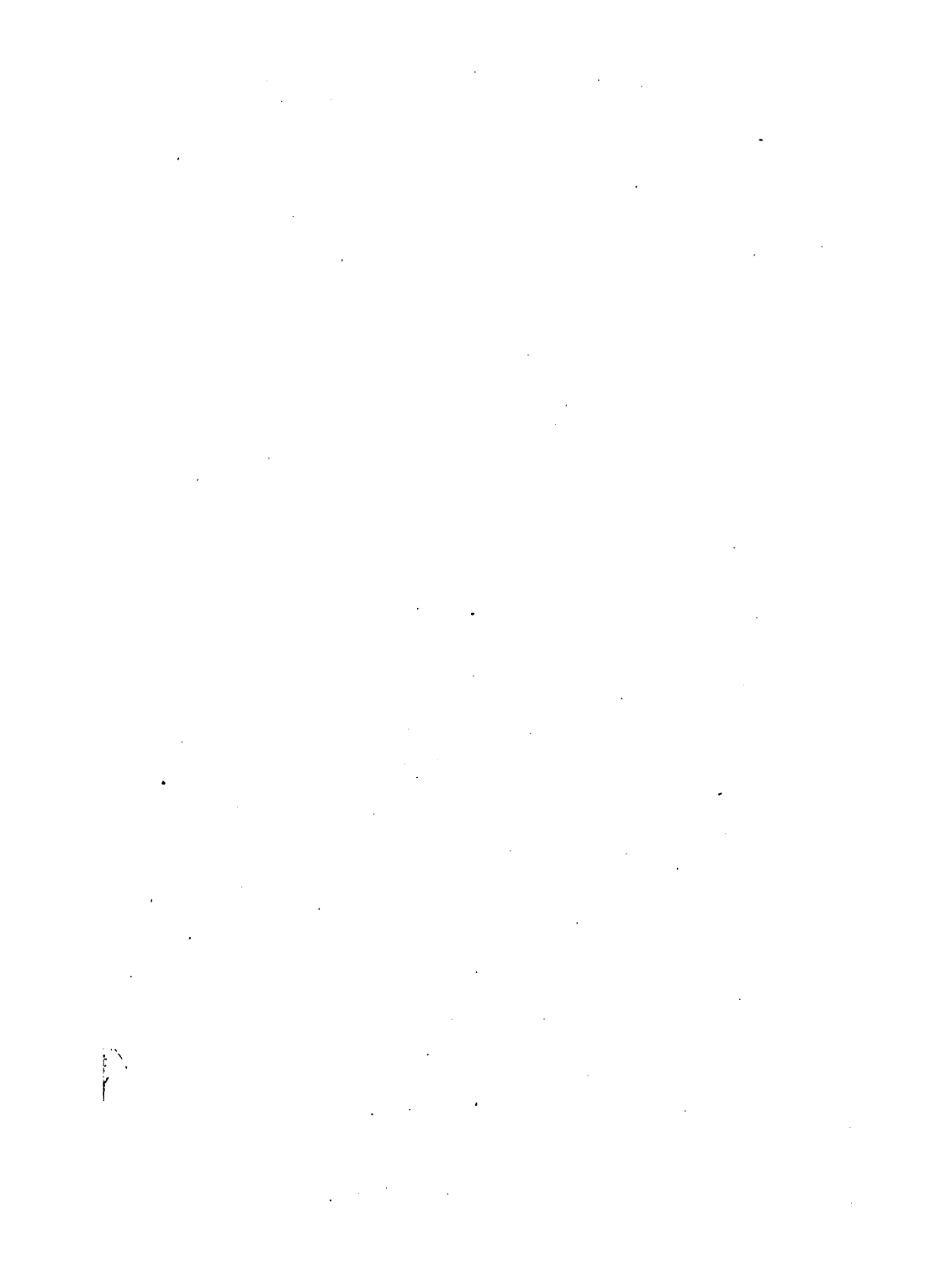


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FOR SCEPTRE AND CROWN.



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FOR SCEPTRE AND CROWN

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A ROMANCE OF THE PRESENT TIME.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

GREGOR SAMAROW.

pseud. of

Oskar Meding

IN TWO VOLUMES. VOL. I.

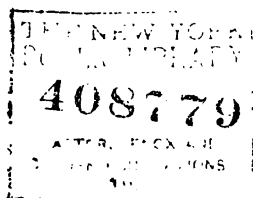


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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE success which "Um Szepter und Kronen" has met with on the Continent justifies an English translation. The author, who writes under the *nom de plume* of Gregor Samarow, is, if report speak truly, himself one of the characters described in his work as the friend and confidant of the chivalrous and unfortunate sovereign who is its principal hero. This explains the ease and familiarity with which the various courts and cabinets are described, the author's personal acquaintance with the statesmen and diplomatists he has portrayed, and it accounts for the value of the work as a clever and interesting political sketch.

It is as a political sketch, and not as an ordinary novel, that it is offered to this country.

Although the great events of 1870 and 1871 have almost swept from memory the history of preceding years, yet the struggle of 1866—the Seven Weeks' War—must ever be memorable; it was the prelude to the great Franco-German War, and its immediate result was that immense increase in the power of Prussia which placed her in her present position of supreme leader in Germany.



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FOR SCEPTRE AND CROWN.

CHAPTER I.

BISMARCK AND MANTEUFFEL.

ABOUT nine o'clock on a dark April evening in the year 1866, a Berlin cab drove up the Wilhelmsstrasse with the trot peculiar to those vehicles, and stopped between the two lamps illuminating the door of No. 76, the house of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The ground floor of this long two-storeyed house was well lighted up, and any one who peeped through the green blinds could see into many office-like rooms, well-filled with industrious writers, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour. The windows of the upper storey were only faintly lighted here and there.

From the cab which drew up before this house stepped a middle-sized man, dressed in a dark paletot and black hat; he came close to the gas-lamp to look in his purse for the right coins with which to pay the fare, and as soon as he had settled with the numbered Automedon he rang loudly at the door-bell.

The door opened almost immediately, and the person demanding admittance entered a spacious *porte-cochère*, at the end of which, between two large sleeping stone lions, ascended the flight of steps leading to the interior

of the house. On one side of the doorway a window opened into the porter's lodge, and at the window appeared the porter's face, wearing that peculiarly stolid expression common to the door-keepers of all great houses.

The porter looked at the new-comer inquisitively through the half-open window, but he only gave him a hasty glance as he walked on with quiet, measured tread to the flight of steps.

As he moved forwards, the light fell brightly on his face, and showed the features of a man of about sixty years of age, of a rather dark and healthy complexion. The quick, animated dark eyes looked piercing and bright, even through gold-rimmed spectacles, though they also expressed calmness and benevolence. His well-chiselled, regular nose was slightly bowed over the small, firm, beardless mouth, and an energetic up-turned chin completed a countenance so characteristic, that when once beheld it was seldom forgotten.

No sooner did the look darted through these gold spectacles reach the window of the porter's lodge, than the porter's face changed as if by magic.

The expression of indifference and easy condescension vanished instantly, the countenance assumed the look befitting a zealous servant, and its possessor hastened from the door of his lodge leading to the steps, and at last stood in a precise attitude, proving him to be an old soldier, before the visitor, who in the meantime had gained the entrance hall on the ground floor, to which the large stone steps led.

"Is the minister at home?" he inquired, with simple politeness, which, equally unlike the over-strained courtesy of the petitioner and the haughty *nonchalance* of the *parvenu*, proved him to be a man accustomed to move with ease in the highest society.

"At your command, your Excellency," replied the

porter in his official manner. "The French Ambassador has just gone, and no one is here. The minister is now alone."

"And how do you get on? still sound and fit for service?" asked the visitor, kindly.

"Most humble thanks for your Excellency's gracious inquiries. I still get about, although somewhat weaker. Everyone does not wear so well as your Excellency."

"Well, well, we all get older, and draw nearer to the end. Keep a brave heart, and God be with you!" With these kind words, heartily spoken, the grave-looking man walked up the broad staircase towards the first storey, while the old door-keeper watched him with respectful pleasure, and then returned to his lodge.

In the ante-room on the upper floor "his Excellency" found Herr von Bismarck's *valet-de-chambre*, Schönhausen, and was at once conducted through a large, dimly-lighted apartment to the cabinet of the minister. The door was thrown open by the servant, who announced for his master's benefit, "His Excellency von Manteuffel!"

Herr von Bismarck sat at a large writing-table, piled with acts and papers. It was placed in the middle of the room, and lighted by a tall lamp with a dark shade. An arm-chair stood on the other side of the table, in which the minister usually seated his visitors.

Herr von Bismarck rose at his servant's announcement and walked towards his visitor, whilst Manteuffel took in the whole room with one glance from his quick eyes; then, with a slight half-melancholy smile, he seized the president-minister's outstretched hand.

It was a picture of the deepest interest. In the half-second during which these two men stood opposite each other, the present touched the past and the future—the old, the new Prussia.

Both the men were sensible of this impression. They stood opposite one another for a moment in silence.

Herr von Manteuffel we have already described whilst he was entering the Foreign Office. It is only needful to add that the removal of his hat showed hair which was grey and thin, and cut very short. He stood quite still, his right hand clasped in Bismarck's, whilst the slender white fingers of his left held his hat. His features maintained perfect calmness; his mouth was firmly closed, and a guarded reserve appeared to stamp its seal upon the whole being of the man.

Herr von Bismarck, almost a head taller, stood towering above him. The bearing of his powerful form showed he was accustomed to wear uniform; his massive, strongly-marked countenance spoke in its decided features of a vehement, passionate soul; the clear, penetrating grey eyes turned boldly, with a cold gaze, upon the object they wished to watch; and the broad, high brow, which from being somewhat bald appeared even higher than it was, showed immense power of forcing, by an iron will, thoughts and ideas to logical arrangement.

"I thank you for your kind visit," said Bismarck, after a few moments. "You preferred coming to me here, instead of receiving me as I requested."

"It is better so," replied Manteuffel. "Your visit to me would have excited curiosity. Here, too, we are safe from eavesdroppers; and, I suppose, an important subject is to be discussed."

"Yes, unhappily, only a grave and extraordinary occasion can procure me the happiness of hearing the experienced counsels of my old chief. You know how often I long for your advice, and yet you always avoid every expression of opinion," said Herr von Bismarck, with a slight accent of reproach.

"What good would it do?" returned Herr von Manteuffel, politely but coldly. "To act for myself, to answer for myself, was my rule when I occupied the position you now fill. If once a leading statesman begins to ask advice right and left, he loses the power of advancing resolutely on the path which his reason and his conscience point out to him as the right one."

"Now, truly, it is not my way to listen to every one, and no want of resolution prevents my choosing my own path," cried Bismarck, warmly; "and," he added, with a slight smile, "my friends the members of the Diet cast it daily in my teeth that I do not sufficiently heed their good advice; yet you will own that there are moments when the strongest brain may long to hear the views and the advice of a master mind, who can look back, my honoured friend, upon such actions as yours."

"And such a moment has now come?" asked Manteuffel, quietly, whilst his piercing eyes rested on Bismarck's animated face, his own features not in the least responding to the compliment just paid him.

"If ever there was a time in which the strongest mind must be assailed by doubt, it is the present moment. You know the position of Germany and of Europe, and you know that the mighty crisis *must* come, upon which the fate of centuries depends," said Herr von Bismarck.

"I believe it *will* come, whether it *must* come or not; but," added Herr von Manteuffel, after a short pause, "our conference will touch upon subjects of the highest importance, and you know my profound dislike of officious meddling in things which do not concern me. May I then ask, does the king know of this conversation, and of its subject?"

"His Majesty knows, and desires I should ask your advice," answered Bismarck.

"Then it is my duty to express my humble opinion so far as it is formed in my own mind," said Manteuffel, quietly, as he seated himself in the arm-chair near the writing-table, while Bismarck took his usual place. "Before, however, I can speak on the present situation, I must know what your intentions are, what is the aim of your policy, and by what means you intend to attain that end. Permit me," he continued, as with a slight movement of the hand he politely repressed a remark from Herr von Bismarck—"permit me to state, from my private and remote observations, what I believe your intentions to be. You must then honestly tell me if I am right or mistaken."

Herr von Bismarck bowed in silence, and fixed his candid eyes with a look of the greatest attention upon Herr von Manteuffel.

"Your aim is," continued the latter, quietly, "according to the conviction I feel from the progress of events, to solve, or rather to end, the great German question; your aim is to place Prussia at the head of the political and military power of Germany, and to turn the edge of the sword against any who shall oppose you. In a word, you wish to bring that long, chronic sickness, called 'the German Question,' to an acute crisis, and to cure it for ever by the arcanum of blood and iron."

"I do," replied Bismarck, without moving or raising his voice; but it vibrated so strangely that these two words rang through the room like the clash of arms, and his eyes, which were still fixed on Herr von Manteuffel, seemed to emit an electric stream. Thus, when Laocoon's lance touched the horse of Troy, there rang from within, the low, faint clang of the Grecian arms, the first note of that terrible harmony, before which the walls of Pergamus were destroyed, and which, echoing back from

the strings of Homer's lyre, for two thousand years has thrilled the hearts of men.

"You do not deceive yourself as to the strong opposition you will encounter," continued Herr von Manteuffel; "the crisis is come, and the struggle will take place, and before long, for unless I am quite deceived, the other side is equally anxious to bring matters to an issue."

"I know it," replied Herr von Bismarck.

"Well," added Manteuffel, "we must then consider the means we can employ in this struggle. There is, to begin with, the Prussian army—a thing of great preponderance, which will weigh heavily in the balance, and the importance of which I do not undervalue for a moment. This army possesses advantages which I do not understand, but which are very important in a military point of view: the needle-gun, the artillery, and the general staff. But in this struggle other powers must be taken into consideration; our allies, and public opinion. Our allies seem to me doubtful—France? You must know better than I, your position with the Man of Silence; England will wait for the success of one side or the other; Russia is safe. As to public opinion——"

"Is there such a thing?" interrupted Bismarck.

Herr von Manteuffel smiled slightly, and continued, "Under ordinary circumstances, public opinion is the result of an effective bit of decoration, which makes a lively impression on the crowd, now lighting up Fiesco's restless sea, now throwing a flood of heavenly glory into Egmont's dungeon. To those behind the scenes, it is the result of machinery, and is produced by pulling the right string at the right moment. I believe *we* understand both scenes and machinery. But there is another

kind of public opinion that rises like the wind, incomprehensible, unmanageable, and terrible as the wind when it rouses itself to a storm. The strife that lies nearest in the lap of Fate is a strife of German against German, a civil war, and in such a war Public Opinion claims her right: she is a powerful ally and a terrible foe, terrible above all to the vanquished, against whom she calls up relentlessly the *væ victis*. Public opinion, however, is against war, less perhaps in Germany than in Prussia itself, and honestly considering the composition of the Prussian army, that is no subject for indifference."

Herr von Bismarck exclaimed warmly, "Do you believe it possible that——"

"The Prussian army should forget its duty, and refuse to march?" concluded Herr von Manteuffel. "No, never; certainly not! Single instances of irregularity might occur in the Landwehr; they would be unusual, most unusual. The army will do its duty, it is the incarnation of a perfect sense of duty, but you will not deny there is an immense difference between duty performed with heartiness and enthusiasm, or with ill-will and aversion?"

"Heartiness and enthusiasm will come with success," said Bismarck.

"But until then?"

"Until then the spirit of duty must be kept firm, and the management must be good."

"Well," said Manteuffel, "I do not doubt it will be so. I only wished to point out, that in this strife a mighty and important power will be not *for*, but *against* you."

"You are right as to the present moment," replied Herr von Bismarck, after a short pause; "to-day public opinion, which you so aptly compared to the wind, is

against me; but it changes as easily as the wind itself. And yet I cannot allow you are altogether right. It is true the superficial world, composed of the shallow liberalism of the tea-gardens and the ale-houses, prating of a Germany which exists only in its own brain, speaks of a civil and fratricidal war against Austria, but believe me, this does not go down with the Prussian people. The heart of Prussia goes at the head of her army, and through the army rings the "Hohenfriedberg March,"—the Prussian people regards the country of Maria Theresa as the foe of that Prussian spirit which old Fritz breathed into the nation. And these orators and speechifiers? Oh, I fear them not, with their public opinion, which will change like a weather-cock in the wind, at the first breath of success."

"I, too, will own that you are partly right, but not quite," said Herr von Manteuffel; "but success—is it certain? Is it prepared beforehand? We have touched upon two powers, let us come to the third, perhaps the most important—allies. What is your position with France and Napoleon III.?"

At this direct and sharply-uttered question, which was accompanied by a look quite as cutting as the tone of voice in which it was asked, Herr von Bismarck's lips trembled slightly for a moment, and something of uncertainty, doubt, and mistrust, perhaps a mixture of all three, appeared in his eyes; but all this quickly vanished, and he answered calmly, in the same clear, ringing voice as before,

"Good—at least as good as it can be with this mysterious sphinx."

"Have you agreements, treaties,—or, far better than these, have you a personal promise from Napoleon?" inquired Manteuffel.

"You catechise closely," replied Bismarck, "but I stand before my master; hear then what has happened in that quarter, and how the question now stands.

"More than two years ago, in November, 1864, I spoke to the emperor on the Danish question. He was eager for the restitution of North Schleswig to Denmark. I spoke on the sad and critical situation of Prussia, split into two distinct halves; I stated how great an error it would be to erect a new small state in the north, and how much more advantageous it would be to Denmark to have a great and powerful neighbour, than to have on her borders the little court of a prince who sets up claims to the Danish crown. The emperor listened to everything, and from the few words he said seemed to agree with me on the need of better boundaries for Prussia, though as usual it was impossible to make him say anything clear and decided; but he was evidently much displeased with Austria, and complained of the great insincerity of the Court of Vienna."

"And did you promise him North Schleswig if he supported your views?" asked Manteuffel.

"He may think I did," replied Bismarck, smiling a little; "as he confined himself to listening and nodding his head, I thought it only necessary to make vague remarks."

Herr von Manteuffel bowed his head in silence, and Herr von Bismarck continued.

"At the Gastein conference some explanations took place, but I could not succeed in obtaining any positive declaration, and in November, 1865, I went to Biarritz; but there, too, it was impossible to draw the Man of Silence from his resolute reserve. I knew that important negotiations were going on with Austria for the solution of the Italian question; perhaps this was the

cause of the cold reserve shown to me ; perhaps, too—— you know Count Goltz ?”

“ I know him,” said Manteuffel, with a meaning smile.

“ You know, too, that at that time a rumour was circulated that Count Goltz would take my place. What was going on in Paris was not clear to me ; but things did not go as I wished, and as I thought they should. I acted for myself. On my return from Biarritz I spoke to Prince Napoleon.”

“ Seriously ?” asked Herr von Manteuffel.

“ Quite seriously,” answered Bismarck, with a slight smile upon his lips, “ and I saw that Italy was the bait with which the imperial policy must be caught. Good Prince Napoleon was fire and flame. I got up an agitation in Florence, and in a short time firm negotiations were established, the result of which I will lay before you.”

Herr von Manteuffel expressed by a movement, his intense interest in this communication.

Herr von Bismarck turned over a small bundle of papers which lay on the writing-table close to his hand, and went on.

“ Here is the Italian treaty, negotiated with General Govone ; it undertakes to attack Austria on the south, with the sea and land forces of Italy.”

“ And France ?” asked Manteuffel.

“ The emperor concedes,” replied Bismarck, “ our acquisition of Holstein and Schleswig, without the province of North Schleswig ; he acknowledges the necessity of connecting the two divided portions of Prussia, to do which part of Hanover and Hesse Cassel must be obtained ; neither will he oppose the Prussian command of the 10th army corps of the confederacy.”

"And what does *he* want?" asked Manteuffel.

"Venetia for Italy."

"And for himself, for France?"

"For himself," returned Bismarck, "nothing."

"Nothing?" said Herr von Manteuffel, "nothing? But have you no clue to his unspoken thoughts? As far as I remember he *wanted* nothing, when he took Savoy and Nice after the Italian war."

"As to his thoughts," said Bismarck, "I believe I guess correctly when I say he regards the possession of Luxemburg as highly desirable, and in the far horizon the acquisition of Belgium by France seems feasible to him. You know that in Brussels the wind often blows strongly to Orleans."

"And what does Napoleon think about you in connection with these desires?" further inquired Manteuffel.

"What he pleases," returned Bismarck, indifferently. "If he wanted nothing, I had no occasion to promise him anything, and as to his wishes,—well,—it certainly was not my business to point out to him that they were foolish and unattainable."

"I understand," said Manteuffel, with a nod.

"Hanover must receive compensation for what she cedes to us in Lauenburg and Holstein," added Bismarck.

"Did the Emperor Napoleon require it?" inquired Herr von Manteuffel, with some surprise.

"Certainly not," replied Bismarck; "after the traditions of his family he loves not the Guelphs, and, as you see, the basis of the whole arrangement is Prussian supremacy in North Germany; what goes on there is to him a matter of complete indifference. No, our own gracious master is most anxious that Hanover should stand by us in the approaching struggle, and that

the old family ties which exist between the two houses should be continued in the future."

"And you yourself," inquired Herr von Manteuffel, "what do you think about the 'Hanoverian question?'"

"Simply from a political point of view," replied Bismarck, candidly, "I certainly wish Hanover did not exist, and I regret that at the Congress of Vienna our diplomacy was not exerted to persuade the royal family of England to give up this hereditary possession. I think we might have succeeded. Hanover is a thorn in our flesh, and even with the best intentions towards us, cripples us greatly. When she bears us ill-will, as for some time past has been the case, she is really dangerous. If I were the complete Machiavelli I am accused of being, I should direct my whole attention to the acquisition of Hanover. Perhaps it would not be so difficult as it appears," he added, following, though half unwillingly, the thoughts which arose in his mind; "neither the English nation, nor the royal family in England, would trouble themselves much about it, and—but as you know, our gracious king is highly conservative, and has a deep respect for the connection between Prussia and Hanover, embodied in Sophia Charlotte and Queen Louise,—and I—well—I am not less conservative; this connection is not less sacred to me, and I follow the ideas of the King from my heart and my head, and I will endeavour to make the future existence of Hanover possible. But things cannot go on as they are at present—we must have guarantees; the more our country enlarges and consolidates its possessions, the more our commerce increases, so much the less can Prussia permit, in her body, so near to her heart, a foreign element, which in any crisis may turn into a hostile element. I can then reply to you with the greatest truth: I will honestly and

earnestly strive to win over Hanover, and if on her side she stands by her old traditions, and is true to us, I will endeavour to create her a safe and honourable, nay, a brilliant position in North Germany. But of a truth she must cease to make us feel she is an encumbrance."

"And have you any prospect of succeeding in arranging a firm alliance with Hanover?" asked Herr von Manteuffel.

"I hope so," replied Bismarck, after a moment's pause. "Count Platen was here; you know him?"

Herr von Manteuffel smiled.

"Well," added Herr von Bismarck, "we spared nothing; we overwhelmed him with compliments of every kind. He received the Grand Cross of the Red Eagle."

"Why not of the Black Eagle?" asked Manteuffel.

"Bah! Some powder must always be reserved; he was overjoyed as it was. I propounded to him the family connection which his Majesty himself earnestly desires, and through which, perhaps, the whole question may be settled in the most friendly manner."

"I know of this casually," interrupted Manteuffel; "do you think the project will succeed?"

"They seem favourable in Hanover," replied Bismarck; "in Norderney as well as in Marienburg—time will show; for the present, I place more reliance on our policy."

"And what has Count Platen promised us?"

"Neutrality, as he already promised Count Ysenburg."

"And is the treaty concluded?"

"Count Platen could not, of course, conclude it himself, and he wished the whole matter to be a profound secret, that the suspicions of France and Austria might not be prematurely aroused. He made me the most

distinct promises, and spoke so bitterly of Beust, and of the ministry of Vienna, that I could not but believe him."

"Forgive me," exclaimed Herr von Manteuffel, "for being on this Hanoverian question,—I consider it of the greatest importance; in short, forgive me for being still sceptical. It seems to me negotiations have been carried on without any definite result, beyond assurances and promises from Count Platen. Would it not have been better to take some decided step in Hanover itself? George V. is no Louis XIII., and Count Platen no Richelieu."

"I thought of that also," remarked Herr von Bismarck. "You know Herr von Stockhausen, accredited here by Hanover, is related to the Baudissins. One of the Baudissins, an author and writer in newspapers, of whom you may have heard, has, through young von Stockhausen, his father's secretary, formed a great friendship with Keudell; perhaps through that channel we may influence the King of Hanover. I must, however, repeat that I sincerely desire friendly relations with Hanover, and the maintenance of the throne, and that I will do all in my power to obtain this result, contrary to the opinion of many Prussians, as you know. Hanover and Hesse Cassel always hang together; the Prince of Hesse follows in the footsteps of the King of Hanover. This question causes me little uneasiness, however; their forces are small, and in any encounter we must be victorious."

"And," added Herr von Manteuffel, "will it be possible to engage Bavaria and Wurtemberg to remain neutral during a war with Austria?"

"No," replied Herr von Bismarck, "the Austrian party is all-powerful in Munich; and Prince Reuss writes

me word that since a rumour has been heard of the Italian alliance, all hopes of Bavarian neutrality are gone. The only thing we may attain is a lukewarm war. The real difficulty will be with Bohemia. I believe I have now candidly laid before you the whole of our present position. If you wish any particular point to be more clearly stated, question me upon it; and now I beg your opinion *en connaissance de cause*."

Herr von Manteuffel looked for a moment on the ground in silence; then he raised his eyes to the animated face opposite to him, and began to speak in the soft melodious voice, and flowing, impressive language which always, though he was never a great public orator, produced so powerful an effect in private intercourse.

"I see, certainly, that you have considered every point which will influence the approaching struggle, and in many respects the chances of success are in your favour; but only *one point* is fully prepared, complete, and sure: this point is the Prussian army. Everything else in the building is tottering and unsafe. The relations with France are neither clear nor certain; Germany appears to me hostile; then, to speak candidly, I do not believe in the neutrality of Hanover; the king's character makes a safe and prudent policy very improbable, and, I repeat it, Hanover may be very dangerous. Remember the Kalik brigade is still in Holstein; remember Hanover and Hesse combined, possess a tolerably large army, and you would have no troops to spare for operating against them. Italy? Her alliance is certain, you tell me; well, I will believe she holds to her promises. Do you think an Italian army can reckon on success? I do not think so. However miserable Austria's military organization may be, let Italy be the theatre of war in the district of those square fortresses, and Austria will always

win ; the Austrian general-staff know all that district as well as a chess-board : they have been educated, so to speak, drilled by it. I foresee only defeat for Italy."

"But," interrupted Bismarck, with some warmth, "the very fact of Austria's being compelled to carry on two wars at once will weigh heavily against her. How many troops will be opposed to us? Austria, I have been informed, hopes to obtain from the different German States 800,000 men; I know for certain there will not be half that number."

"Well," said Manteuffel, "let us leave off calculating the chances; I acknowledge they are in your favour, chiefly through the excellence of the army. But another grave question arises; Is war necessary? Is the position such, that all the horrors, all the great dangers of a mighty struggle must be encountered? You know I too desire to see Prussia at the head of Germany; I desire it as a Prussian, I wish for it from conviction as a German, and as a minister I laboured for it to the best of my ability. I believed, however, it would be the result of organic growth, developed by time, and I dreaded, as the greatest foe to Prussian leadership, the mistrust of Germany. This mistrust, the fear of the princes for their sovereignty and the future of their dynasties—the fear of the different races lest their individuality should be stamped out by Prussia, has been skilfully used by Austria, who is secured from this mistrust by her greater complexity. I held it should be the endeavour of Prussia (for which I worked myself) to obtain the confidence of the princes and people of Germany. That gained, the leadership is ours, and Austria's part played out; for were it not for this mistrust, the German spirit—the spirit of creation and enlightenment—the spirit of progressive national life, would turn to us. I have besides my own views about a

Prussian war. Our power is great, but it is peculiar and especial; for when it is fully used it sends the whole nation to the field of battle, and with one unfortunate defeat we should be nearer an extreme catastrophe than any other nation. So long as our power threatens, it is strong; it diminishes when action commences. Whilst we stand 'on guard,' the world must dread us. I think," added Herr von Manteuffel, with a shade of satisfaction in his voice, "the Peace of Paris speaks in favour of my maxim. Where is the need of destroying this feeling, greatly endangered by the events with which the century commenced? where is the need of risking Prussia's powerful position of reserve in the uncertain game of war? You will perhaps think me a cowardly, narrow-minded pedant; but you asked my opinion, and I am justified in giving it to you fully."

While Manteuffel spoke, Bismarck's face expressed lively emotion. Increasing impatience trembled over his features, but he did not interrupt by word or movement. As Manteuffel ended, he stood up, approached his guest, and seized his hand, exclaiming:

"Oh, my honoured friend! I know your opinions; I know the noble ideas which guided you while you held the rudder of the Prussian state; I know your conscientiousness and wisdom, and believe me, I too am far from wishing to risk the safety of the Prussian state, which it has required a century of genius and industry to create. Believe me, it is not I that provoke this war; I find myself forced to it by necessity, and if I have not the king's pious horror of measuring myself against perfidious Austria, yet I would never, unless obliged, drive matters to extremity. But I know they have resolved on war in Vienna; they will not allow us to take our rightful position. Yes, they have determined to entangle

and destroy us in the machinery of the Confederation, as you know from the trouble and anxiety you yourself have experienced. That Saxon Beust, and his friends in Vienna—the sanguine Meysenbug, the ambitious pedant Biegeleben, and the fine gentleman Max Gagern, dream of a new German empire, and of a parliament of their own making, which is to place the Emperor Francis Joseph upon the imperial throne of Germany; and the emperor himself lives and moves in these dreams; they really turned his brain with that comedy at Frankfort. The fools did not remember,” he cried energetically, as he paced the room with large strides, “that in Frankfort he was not emperor who roasted whole the *bœuf historique*, to the immense joy of the crowd, and who roused the unhappy German princes from their beds in the early dawn,” he added, with a bitter smile, “to listen, at a *matinée politique*, to Beust’s lukewarm-water eloquence. No, truly he was not the emperor. Another rather, before whose cold refusal and quiet absence the whole apparition vanished into thin air! And I am to wait quietly until they perhaps find a more favourable moment for effecting their grand designs? But, my revered friend,” he continued, as he again approached Herr von Manteuffel, who listened to him with the same calmness as before, “but are there not moments in which bold resolution, rash action, is needful to obtain great success and avert impending danger? Does not the history of Prussia record more than one such moment? What would have become of Prussia if Frederick the Great had waited until the plans of Austria and Saxony—greatly resembling those of to-day—had had time to ripen, if he had not, with the quick bold gripe of his strong hand, destroyed the web of envy and wickedness they were spinning around him? Where would Prussia have been

without York's bold decision? Oh! my honoured friend," exclaimed Bismarck, with emotion, while his form seemed to expand, "my heart tells me, and my reason does not contradict the feeling, that the spirit of the great Frederick, and the spirit of 1813, is the breath of life which inspires Prussian history; that the hand of the world's great time-piece points to an hour in which this spirit must live again, and again urge Prussia onwards: not to go onwards now is to turn back—back into unknown paths. With this conviction in my heart, shall I sit still and let misfortune come; wait," he added, in a lower voice, "until a hand perhaps less strong than mine, a heart less courageous than my own, is called upon to face the danger?"

Herr von Manteuffel, his arm resting on the writing-table, and his eyes cast on the ground, had until now listened without moving. He rose and looked straight into the prime minister's eyes, who waited for him to speak with great excitement and anxiety.

"Herr von Bismarck," he said in his calm voice, in which a warmer tone was heard than before, "you touch a string which vibrates through every Prussian's heart. Who can deny that there are moments in which bold action leads to safety? who can deny that by seizing such moments with firm resolution, Prussia has become what she is? Whether the present is such a moment no mortal can say with certainty, and I will not argue the question with you. To act according to their judgment and their conscience is the duty of those who stand upon the steps of the throne. You stand there now, and I thank God that I do not; for what occurs you must answer to history, your country, and your king. You must decide on what you ought to do, and for nothing in the world would I throw a doubt on your decision. Yet

one more question ; be patient, it shall be the last, perhaps it is the most important."

Manteuffel came a step nearer to Herr von Bismarck, and in a low tone, which made even a greater impression on his hearer, said :—

"What if the game of war goes against you ? what if the chances are wrongly reckoned ? We are all liable to error ; if the victorious foe gains the power of carrying out the plans so long prepared, embittered by the strife, and haughty with success, what scheme have you framed, what preparation have you made to shield Prussia from danger, even from destruction ? You know I have always held the maxim, that a good general must be prepared for a retreat, you will therefore think my question natural, and know how important I deem it."

Herr von Bismarck's face, hitherto so animated, assumed an expression of calm pride ; his lips were firmly compressed, and his eyes flashed like rays of light from naked swords. With the metallic vibration which at certain moments rang through his voice, he replied,

"If I deemed it possible, or could believe that a Prussian army would be beaten by Austria, I would not be the Prussian minister."

He uttered these words in a tone of inmost conviction, and Manteuffel slowly stepped backwards, and gazed with amazement at the prime minister's enthusiastic face, as though he scarcely understood him. Then he turned leisurely away, seized his hat, and bowing politely to Bismarck, he said quite in his ordinary manner :

"I believe our conversation is concluded ; we have exhausted the subject, and I must no longer waste your valuable time."

The excitement faded from Bismarck's countenance, and melancholy took its place, as he answered, sadly :

"The subject is not exhausted,—say rather, you will discuss it no longer, since, as I plainly perceive, we move in eccentric circles which have not a single point in common."

"If such be the case," said Manteuffel, "any further revolutions on our separate orbits would be useless, but I think," he added, smiling slightly, "on one point we shall agree; time is too precious to be lost in useless words."

"Then farewell," said Bismarck gravely, as he pressed Manteuffel's hand; "you leave me by one hope poorer, by one support weaker."

"You need no support," returned Manteuffel, "and if your convictions prove true, my most earnest wishes for the increase and development of Prussia's greatness will be fulfilled."

He bowed slightly, and left the room.

Bismarck accompanied him to the ante-room, and then seated himself at his writing-table; for some moments he was lost in thought.

"They all, yes, all!" he suddenly cried at last, as he sprang from his chair and paced the room with hasty steps, "they all sing the same song; they all talk of the responsibility, of the danger, of the horrors of war. But do I not feel the responsibility? do I not see the danger? does not my heart grow cold at the thought of the horrors of war? But while I see the danger, I cannot withdraw from the necessity, and while I am convinced of the necessity, I must undertake the responsibility. I understand why most of them would withhold me from bold action, the Liberals in the parliament fear the clash of arms; yes, they dread even victory, and all those weak-minded creatures who prefer to cling in cowardly submission to the present rather than face the future,

they are always the same through all the centuries of history : but he—he is a man of courage and action, he knows danger and does not fear it, yet he warns me back. This is serious ; in comparison to a word from this man, all the privy councillors, diplomatists, and bureaucrats in the whole world are but a feather weight in the scale : and he desires me to prepare for a retreat ! ”

He stood still for a moment and looked thoughtfully on the ground.

“ And is he not right ? ” he said, sadly and gloomily. “ If success fails me, if the enemy is powerful enough to bow down, to break Prussia, what could I do ? walk away, like a careless gambler, judged by all, handed down in all future history as a jest to the common herd ; but then,” he cried, casting a glowing look upwards, “ there is the other side, to draw back, with a conviction of victory in my heart, to lose the opportunity, perhaps for ever, of accomplishing for Prussia the great and glorious future, which I see so brilliantly before me—

‘ The moment comes, but if it is not seized,
Not all eternity will bring it back.’ ”¹

Again he stood still and gazed before him in deep thought.

“ Oh, for light in this darkness ! ” he cried, “ I must have the sky above me, and the fresh air must cool my blood.” He seized his hat and left the room, descended the stair which led from his house to the courtyard, walked through the courtyard with long strides and plunged into the dark walks of a large garden, where trees of ancient growth shaded the back of the hotel and Office for Foreign Affairs.

¹ “ Was du dem Augenblick verloren,
Bringt keine Ewigkeit zurück.”

* * * * *

The same evening, in the same building, in an elegant and cheerfully lighted drawing-room sat an elderly and a young lady, busied with some light feminine work. On one side stood the tea-table, and the tea-kettle sang that peculiar song, which is thought by the English, when joined by the chirping of the cricket, to be the music of the hearth, a greeting from home.

The two ladies were the wife and daughter of the president minister, and von Keudell the minister of legation, the most intimate friend of his chief, sat with them.

They spoke of several events in Berlin society, of the theatres, and various other subjects of interest, but Madame von Bismarck frequently looked with an expression of uneasiness and anxiety towards the door.

"Do you know if my husband has a visitor?" she asked, turning to von Keudell; "I am always uneasy lest his excessive work should seriously injure his health, and I feel quite bitter towards any visitor who shortens the few moments he spends with us in the evening, to rest his brain and refresh his nerves."

"I believe," replied Herr von Keudell, "no one is with him, but he has a few things to conclude."

The door opened, and Bismarck entered. He greeted his wife and daughter affectionately, shook hands with von Keudell, and seated himself in the small family circle.

The minister's daughter poured out tea, whilst a servant handed him a cut-glass of Bavarian beer, which he half emptied at one draught.

"Field Marshal Wrangel came to see me," said Madame von Bismarck; "he wished to pay you a visit, but I prevented him, I told him you were extremely busy."

"I thank you," replied her husband, "I certainly had no time to-day for friendly visits. Affairs become more and more involved, and I need solitude to arrange my thoughts,—and concentrate my will," he added, as the preoccupied look, perceptible when he entered the room, increased.

"The field marshal brought me something very delightful," continued Madame von Bismarck, as she took up an envelope which lay on a little table before her; "I had a good laugh with him at this very original idea."

So saying, she drew out a little card and presented it to her husband.

"Ah!" he cried, "my likeness, with little Lucca—have they published it already? Well, with all my heart; we are both in excellent company!" He laughed as he examined the little picture, and added: "I met her lately Unter den Linden, and walked with her a little way, she complained bitterly of ennui."

"I know not what there is to do,
Unless I'm photographed; do you?"

she cried, impatiently. I offered to join her in this singular amusement, and the result is this comical little carte—which they will talk about, no doubt. *Tant mieux*, a case of the dog of Alcibiades."

Madame von Bismarck looked at the funny little picture, and laughed merrily, but her husband was again lost in gloomy thought.

After a few minutes, during which conversation languished, he raised his head, turned to Herr von Keudell, and said:—

"Will you give us a little music, dear Keudell?"

Keudell seated himself directly at the open piano, which stood on the other side of the drawing-room.

He struck a few chords, and then began to play a kind of prelude, with his wonderfully clear and powerful touch; it progressed irregularly, sometimes by unexpected dissonances, which seemed to accord with the minister's feelings.

Bismarck rose and walked slowly up and down the room, stepping lightly that he might not interrupt the music, nor disturb the impression it made upon him.

Keudell played on and on, sinking ever deeper into the world of sound. Suddenly some powerful chords shook themselves free from all dissonance, and after an easy transition he began to play softly Beethoven's "Sonata in A major."

He had scarcely begun the simple yet affecting air, when Bismarck paused, and the expression of his eyes and the smile on his lips showed that Herr von Keudell's choice consoled and solaced him.

He again paced the room during the glorious variations evoked from this simple air by the immense genius of the poet of sound; as their wonderful sound pictures were unrolled, the minister's face expressed a mighty inward struggle. Now he paused for a moment as if undecided, whispering half-spoken words, then again he walked on rapidly, his eyes gazing into an unseen distance, oblivious of everything around him.

Madame von Bismarck watched her husband with uneasy sympathy; she saw his restless, agitated expression, but she did not disturb von Keudell's playing by a word.

He had now come to that wonderfully beautiful part of the sonata called by Beethoven, "*Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un eroe*," and his masterly execution made the grand chords of the march resound through the room.

Bismarck stood still. His powerful hand grasped the back of a chair, his eyes were directed upwards, and he

looked as if an inspiration passed through his mind as he listened to the impressive tones.

Then followed a representation of the muffled drums, the blast of the trumpets resounded, and von Keudell, carried away by the beauty of the composition, rendered it so as to surpass himself.

Madame von Bismarck had laid down her work and was listening thoughtfully.

The president minister stood motionless. His chest heaved higher, the powerful muscles of his arm grew stiffer, his eyes seemed to shoot out light, as their upward gaze sought in imagination the dark sky bestrewn with stars.

Once more the trumpet blast arose, then the clear sounds died away, and after a short pause Herr von Keudell went on to the finale of the sonata.

Bismarck looked around as if waking from a dream. He stood still for a moment, and then half unconsciously whispered these words:

“And when I go to rest, upon such sounds my soul shall rise. Would a poet ever have felt at a hero’s grave all that those sounds reveal, if there were not men who dared to banish the doubts that assail the heart? *Jacta est alea!*”

And without noticing anyone he quietly left the room. Keudell played to the end of the sonata. Madame von Bismarck put down her work and looked anxiously after her husband.

When the music had ceased she turned to Keudell, who had left the piano and had again approached her, and said:

“I am convinced my poor husband is ill, try to find an opportunity of persuading him to take more care of his health.”

“I will do what I can, dear lady,” he returned; “but

you know he is difficult to persuade on this point. Besides, I do not believe he is unwell; thoughts often come to him when he hears music, probably something has occurred to him now, and he has gone to write it down at once."

Herr von Bismarck had returned to his cabinet with a firm step, and had seated himself at his writing table. All trace of indecision and emotion had left his face, the cold calm of his features was now lighted up by the clear expression of a firm unbending will.

He seized a pen and wrote, without pause or hesitation, a number of notes on some foolscap which lay ready on his table.

After writing for about half an hour he rang the hand bell beside him.

The groom of the chambers appeared.

"Is Herr von Keudell still in the house?"

"At your excellency's command."

"Request him to come to me for a moment."

A few minutes later the minister of legation entered.

"Dear Keudell," said Bismarck, "here are some notes of instruction to the ambassadors in Vienna, Frankfort, and Paris, will you have the goodness to attend to their immediate transmission? Abeken, with his usual talent, will complete the composition quite in my style. Usedom must receive the same instructions, with the additions I have written on the margin."

"I will take care everything is done immediately," said Keudell, bowing, "and to-morrow they shall be sent off."

He glanced at the paper he held in his hand.

"Your excellency," he said with horror, "this is war!"

"It is," said Bismarck. "And now good night. Adieu,

dear Keudell, until to-morrow ; we must sleep, I am really tired, and my nerves require rest."

Herr von Keudell withdrew.

Half an hour later, perfect silence prevailed throughout the Foreign Office ; it was as completely shrouded in the darkness of night as the fate of the future was veiled by the hand of Providence.





CHAPTER II.

FAIR WENDLAND.

AROUND the town of Lüchow, in Hanover, lies the fertile and peculiar country, called, without regard to official subdivisions, by the general name of "Wendland." It is one of the portions of Germany where the old Wend race have preserved themselves tenaciously from any admixture of blood, and where their own especial manners and customs still survive.

This Wendland is a beautiful, rich, and luxuriant country, not beautiful from picturesque views, where hills and valleys unexpectedly arrest the eye, but delightful from the peaceful abundance which clothes its broad plains. Groups of tall and beautiful trees alone vary the even surface of the fields and pastures, but the trees here are remarkable for their grand and stately growth, and from amongst them, gilded by the golden sunlight, here peeps the church of some quiet village, there the old roof of some nobleman's seat; in the distance the outline of a little town appears; and the traveller feels how peaceful it must be to live there, far from the noisy world, the faint echo of whose turbulent waves can scarcely reach the quiet dwellings of the peace-loving inhabitants. Sometimes large sandy plains stretch

out with their enormous pine woods ; monotonous in colour, and solitary, they have somewhat of the beauty of the sea ; a broad sandy road leads through them ; the wild animals approach with little shyness, an inquisitive daw accompanies the carriage ; the strong horses go on slowly, but easily ; nothing is to be seen but the sky, fir trees, and sand, unless another carriage appears going in the opposite direction ; it is seen a long way off, the travellers greet one another, exchange a few words, and are glad of the incident. When the end of the pine forest is reached, and the shadow of the luxuriant deciduous trees falls on the head of the traveller wearied with the sun ; when the rich abundance of the cultivated land greets his eye, and he breathes the mild but invigorating air, he feels the refreshing influences, the horses shake their heads and begin to trot of their own accord, and the coachman with the skilful cracks of his whip, brings out all the dogs from the village inns.

In short, it is a country where travelling still has its troubles and difficulties, and where its old poetry still exists ; in the small towns the old manners and curious customs survive, and the door of the nobleman's house is still hospitably opened to the traveller, who seems to bring with him a breath from the great world, the doings of which, with all its pursuits, sound only like sagas to the inhabitants of these quiet homes.

Such is old Wendland, simple, beautiful, and true. The inhabitants are like the country—healthy and strong as the nature around them, simple as the land in which they live ; rich, because they have what they want, and make no wants they cannot satisfy ; strong in their affections, clear in their simple faith, full of natural unexpressed poetry, with hearts full of warm pure blood.

Through one of these large solitary pine woods, as the

sun was setting on one of the first evenings in April, 1866, there rode along the sandy way a young officer in the uniform of the Hanoverian Cambridge dragoons. He left his beautiful thorough-bred horse to find its own way, which it appeared to know perfectly, whilst he sat carelessly and dreamily in the saddle. A fair moustache covered the young man's upper lip, his blue eyes gazed thoughtfully into the distance, as if he sought in the golden evening clouds surrounding the setting sun, the pictures which filled and occupied his mind. His light hair, though cut very short, contrived to curl coquettishly beneath the small military cap, and his face was rather pale, and though perfectly healthy, showed the peculiar delicacy which young people who have grown very fast frequently retain for a few years after they have reached manhood.

For a quarter of an hour the young officer rode on slowly and dreamily through the pine wood, the shadow of his horse, as it fell behind him, growing longer and longer, and the voices of the birds telling they were fluttering to their nests.

Then the road turned, the wood suddenly opened and a venerable castle appeared at some little distance, surrounded by tall old trees, the last rays of the sun making its large windows appear to stream with light.

At the end of the wood the village began; it was built sideways from the castle, in the form of a semicircle, as is usual in Wendland villages.

The dogs barked. The young officer awoke from his reverie, and straightened himself in the saddle. The horse felt the movement and wanted no other urging; he quitted his walk, and trotted with pointed ears through the village on the road to the castle.

The houses stood open on the warm beautiful spring

evening. On their gables were seen the characteristic horses' heads, which in all Low Saxon countries play so important a part; their worship was formerly accepted by the Wends heré, and the figures are still carefully retained.

Peasant women, both old and young, sat before their doors, occupied with their needles; inside the open houses the women were seen finishing their work at the loom, and as they worked, they sang the strange, melancholy, monotonous songs which are peculiar to the Wend race.

At every house the young officer was greeted, and he returned the salutations in a friendly way, speaking to most of the peasants by name, in a manner that showed he was well known, and near home.

On one side of the semicircular village, not far from the road leading to the castle, stood a plain old church, and near to it, in a pretty, well-kept garden, the quiet, cheerful-looking vicarage.

There was a foot-path from the garden to the broad road leading to the castle, and on this path two persons walked towards the highway.

One was an old gentleman of nearly sixty years of age; his black coat buttoned up to his throat, his dazzlingly white cravat of fine folded cambric, as also that remarkable tall square biretta of black velvet, made on the exact pattern of those handed down to us in portraits of Luther and Melanchthon, and still preferred by the Hanoverian clergy, showed at a glance that he was the village pastor.

His full, strongly-marked face, with its healthy colour, expressed, besides benevolent cheerfulness, a great deal of energetic character, and a decided, cultivated mind, which, separated from the great stream of life, had

developed wonderfully in seclusion, framing a world of its own, where it found both peace and happiness.

It was Pastor Berger, who for more than twenty years had lived here amongst his flock.

Beside him walked his only daughter; for the last ten years, ever since her mother's death, she alone had shared her father's quiet life, and he had bestowed upon her education great and loving care; avoiding the common taste for amusements only to be found in the great world so far off, and teaching her to enjoy the quiet happiness which so completely satisfied himself.

The young girl's dark dress had a certain elegance, notwithstanding its country simplicity. She was not tall, but slender and graceful; her glossy chestnut hair appeared beneath the black velvet hat which shaded her delicate oval face, the slightly parted fresh lips smiled as if they breathed in happiness, whilst the brilliant though soft and thoughtful eyes, showed depths of intense poetic feeling.

The young officer perceived them, reined in his horse, and raising his hand to his cap for a military salute, exclaimed, "Good evening, Herr Pastor; good evening, Miss Helena!"

The clergyman called out "Good evening" loudly and cheerfully, and he too saluted with his hand; his daughter only slightly bowed her head without uttering a word, but the smile trembling on her lips, the joyful look beaming in her eyes, proved her greeting to be as hearty as her father's.

They both hastened on, and in a few moments they overtook the young man who awaited them on the high road; he sprang from his horse as the pastor and his daughter approached, and held out his hand.

"You were expected yesterday, Herr von Wenden-

stein," said the pastor; "your brother arrived the day before, and your father began to fear your leave had been refused."

"I could not come sooner—I was on duty yesterday," replied the young officer; "but that will enable me to stay two days longer. I can have some more lessons in natural history from my little mistress," he added, turning to the girl with a smile; she meanwhile was patting and caressing the horse's neck and head.

"If you are not more attentive and diligent than you were last time, you will make very little progress," said the pastor's daughter; "but give me Roland's bridle, he likes me to lead him best, and make haste to the castle; we were going there, and we shall be much more welcome if we bring you with us."

She took the horse's bridle, stepped aside, and followed the two gentlemen to the castle, leading the horse and speaking a coaxing word to him from time to time.

The approach to the castle was through a massive gateway leading into a paved court-yard, surrounded by low walls, which evidently had replaced the ancient bulwarks.

In the midst of this large enclosure stood a single linden-tree of great age; to the right and left were stables and domestic offices, apparently modern, in two large low buildings. On the further side of the court-yard was the dwelling-house itself, the remains of an edifice evidently once of immense extent. Without any architectural beauty, without even belonging to any particular period, the castle made the impression which a large and ancient mass of stone-work of vast dimensions, placed in the open country and surrounded with trees, always produces.

The enormous oaken door of the house stood open; it

led into a large stone hall lighted by two great windows on the right and left of the doorway. Against the walls of this hall stood many of those immense oak chests, black with age, in which our forefathers from generation to generation stored their household treasures of linen, silver plate, their family papers, and whatever else they considered valuable and worthy of preservation.

These old coffers tell us almost as much as a family chronicle, or as some old Saga; they disappear in these modern times—there is no room for them in our modern tiny drawing-rooms, or in the boudoirs crowded with knick-knacks of the housewives of the present day. They are no longer needed; who would now dream of beginning a collection of fine linen for a daughter's trousseau as soon as she was born? it can be bought good, cheap, and above all, in the newest style at the shops. What need is there now for such deep, broad shrines to contain the silver plate of the house, when electro-plate is so beautiful, and can be changed with the fashion? However, these venerable old coffers still stood in the place of honour, and cared nothing about the generation of console-tables and tiny brackets which had taken the world by storm; above them hung dark old oil-paintings, hunting pieces with wonderfully stiff gentlemen riding equally stiff steeds, then came shepherdesses leading their flocks through very flowery meadows to the shade of woods, with long straight alleys strongly resembling Versailles; there were family portraits of old gentlemen in enormous wigs and velvet coats, in long-forgotten uniforms, and in black robes; there were smiling ladies with ruffs, fontanges, or sacks. And the old times seemed to live and breathe here quite naturally, as if it would always be the same to-day as it was yesterday, and the same to-morrow as it was to-day.

Right and left of this lofty and spacious hall, old oaken doors led to the principal sitting-rooms; opposite to the entrance was a large apartment, which in a modern house would be called the drawing-room, but here its simple and massive furniture corresponded with the rest of the castle. The only modern thing in the room was a beautiful piano; it stood open, and the music lying about it showed it was constantly used.

A large high-backed sofa stood against the wall, behind an enormous table of dark mahogany supported on column-like legs; a lamp with a large ground-glass globe and a tall, slender green lacquered stand, was already lighted, and struggled against the mild twilight which entered the room through two large windows and an open glass door. Beyond the glass door was a broad terrace, which extended along the whole length of the house on the garden side, and ended at the right corner in a round platform resting on stone foundations, evidently the spot on which in former times a large round tower must have stood.

High trees enclosed the terrace, but there were well-arranged vistas allowing the light to enter the windows freely, and opening out distant glimpses of the rich country extending on every side. Flower-beds edged with box adorned the well-kept lawn, already gay with variegated crocuses and snowdrops.

Such was the old castle of Blechow, where for the last eighteen years the worthy President von Wendenstein had administered the law after the patriarchal fashion of Hanover, where formerly the large landowners were also the chief magistrates, and the golden fruit of the tree was more highly prized than the grey theory of administrative form.

Herr von Wendenstein was not the autocrat his fore-

fathers had been ; a more severe standard had been raised, and the government of the country was different—more unbending, more bureaucratic ; but the old office had devolved upon him with the castle of Blechow, and a considerable fortune permitted him to live in the style of former Hanoverian *high sheriffs*¹ and chief magistrates ; his clear understanding and knowledge of the law enabled him to satisfy the new authorities, while he maintained the old order of things as much as possible, the personal respect and esteem he inspired greatly strengthening his authority.

In the large family sitting-room, on the big sofa, before the table, now brightly lighted by the lamp as the twilight decreased, sat the mistress of the house, Madame von Wendenstein, the worthy mistress of this great old echoing castle, with its enormous doors, bewitching coffers, and venerable portraits. A snow-white tulle cap, with carefully-plaited frills and silver grey ribbons, surrounded the old lady's delicate-featured, somewhat pale face, which, although she was only a few years younger than her husband, still bore traces of great beauty in the well-formed mouth and the large almond-shaped blue eyes. The hair, still abundant, though almost white, was smoothly parted, and hung in carefully-curled locks on either side her face ; these the old lady frequently stroked back with her slender white fingers, and arranged beneath the borders of her cap. Her features expressed unusual mildness and gentleness, and at the same time such extreme repose and unassuming dignity, that no stranger could have seen her, as she sat in her simple black silk dress, made in no French fashion, either old or modern, with its exquisitely white collar and cuffs, her

¹ *Droste*.

hands resting in her lap with the white embroidery on which they had been occupied, her eyes fixed upon the evening sky with a look of thankful happiness,—no stranger could have seen her without feeling that a spirit of order, gentleness, and hospitality would greet all who entered the house. No speck of dust, no ill-cooked dish, no deviation from the regular times and hours would be permitted; but no trouble could assail a member of the family, no body or heart could suffer without the quick, true eyes of the mother and wife perceiving it, without a kind, good word from her mouth endeavouring to alleviate and console.

Such was the mistress of the old castle of Blechow. Her daughters, two young girls, sat beside her, pretty, blooming creatures of fifteen and eighteen, the latter possessing the beauty of the grown-up maiden, the former the charm of childhood. Their toilettes were very simple, but their beautifully-embroidered *lingerie* and tastefully arranged hair, gave them an appearance of great refinement.

With the ladies sat the auditor von Bergfeld, the assistant granted to the president, who, according to old-fashioned custom, was received as a guest in the family.

President von Wendenstein walked up and down the terrace with his eldest son, who was employed by the Ministry of the Interior in Hanover as a government assessor and reporter. He had come to Blechow to keep his father's birthday, which had for some years past always been observed by the family.

President von Wendenstein had a pleasing and dignified appearance. His thick close-cut grey hair surrounded a broad forehead, with thick, arched eyebrows, beneath which were dark grey eyes, so clear, sharp and severe, yet with such an expression of jovial cheerfulness,

such sparks of fiery animation, it was impossible not to imagine him twenty years younger than he really was. His long, well-shaped nose, his broad mouth, with full red lips and excellent teeth, his fresh complexion, formed altogether a picture of mental power and physical enjoyment of life commanding sympathy and respect.

He had, according to the old fashion, no beard, and he wore clothes of a light grey woollen material, with a light cap. His strong right hand grasped an ivory-handled stick, with which he supported his steps, for he suffered from gout, the only weakness that appeared in the healthy, energetic old gentleman.

His eldest son walked by him, in features unmistakeably resembling his father, in every other respect totally unlike him.

His dress, even to his hat, was that of a dweller in cities—glossy, simple, and faultless; his face, paler than his father's, expressed both polite civility and official reserve. His hair was smooth and carefully parted, his whiskers cut after the newest fashion, and his movements were quiet, gentle, and studied.

Such had his father never been in his youth—that could be seen at a glance, but he had grown up in very different times: the father was a character, the son a type.

“And you may say what you like,” cried Herr von Wendenstein with animation, as he stood still and planted his stick firmly on the ground, “this new method of administration which is continually progressing, will not answer, and will lead to nothing good. These everlasting inquiries compel us to make reports, which take up an endless time, and seldom give a clear account of the matter; these orders on every possible subject (they often just miss knocking the nail on the head) take from the immediate governors of the country all self-reliance,

all responsibility, and turn organization into machinery. The people and the country, however, continue living flesh and blood, and will not fit into the machine, hence the government is estranged from those governed, the magistrates become mere scribes, and stand helplessly by when an occasion arises requiring decision and judgment. Ever since the most humble reports to every inquiry and the most exact compliance with every order emanating from the boards of green cloth have become essential, human beings, who cannot be shut up and put away with law acts, have got on as they could, and," he added with a jovial laugh, "that is the least evil, for folks often get on best alone. The good old times—well, they had their faults, but in this they were better. The magistrates knew the people, and lived amongst them; they acted according to the law and their own consciences, and the government supported them. The minister travelled through the country once a year, and knew much better what went on, and on whom he could depend, than they will ever discover now from the most lengthy reports. But," he said laughingly, after a moment's pause, "I have no right to complain. If they require reports they give me an auditor to write them, and the orders I receive with due respect, but I give judgment after the old laws, and my subjects are quite contented. I think they will find everything in my jurisdiction in perfect order, more so than in many others where the modern method is more fully established."

His son listened with the respect always shown to his father in this family, but he could not prevent a half impatient, half compassionate smile from curling his lip. As his father ceased, he replied in the measured, half pathetic, half monotonous voice peculiar to the eloquence of the green board, and known throughout the world

wherever tables covered with green cloth, reports, and acts of parliament exist.

"It is only natural, my dear father, that you should love and defend old times; but you will agree with me, when I say the developments of time require alterations in government. The power of the landowners, the basis of the national economy of former generations, made them despotic, and divided the country and the people into isolated groups; individuals and acquaintances composed these almost domestic societies; they lived their own separate lives, and it was then right and suitable that the government should be equally individual. Now the national economy struggles for concentration; the great means of locomotion in our day, always rapidly increasing, destroys the boundaries of time and space, those powers which separated different societies. The individual group now forms part of the comprehensive whole, and it is needful for the government to follow out this development of life in the people and the country, by quick changes and rapid concentration; a strong principle, a pervading system, is required throughout the administration, or the machine will stand still. Believe me, dear father, the government does not force a new element into our life, it is life itself in its irresistible development which obliges the government to adopt a quicker and more precise form of administration. Besides," he added, "I do not believe our views are so very different; with all your love for the past, you are quite equal to the present. The minister told me lately the punctuality, order, and quickness in your jurisdiction were admirable, and always remarked by the authorities."

The old gentleman smiled, visibly flattered by his son's compliment, and said good-humouredly:

"Well, I manage to keep pace with the present, but I love the past best; and notwithstanding all you have said, I think matters might have been managed with less system, paper, and ink. But we will not argue about it any more," he said, as he patted his son's shoulder; "I am a child of my own generation, you live in yours;—men always bear the stamp of the times in which they live, whether they will or no. It is a pity the Present takes it so easily, and that all her children are stamped after the same pattern: they are made at a manufactory, and no longer bear signs of good home-made work. But let us go in, your mother is at the door calling us, and my old enemy," pointing to his foot with his stick, "conspires with the evening air a new attack upon my old bones."

He turned slowly to the glass door of the drawing-room where his wife stood looking as if framed, as she gazed after him anxiously.

He had reached her side followed by his son, when the barking of the dogs in the courtyard was heard, and soon afterwards voices sounded in the hall.

An old servant in a neat green livery opened the door, and the pastor Berger with his daughter Helena entered. The president, who had the greatest esteem for the clergyman, welcomed him warmly, and shook hands with him most heartily before he had time even to greet the lady of the house: and his daughters seized on Helena.

"We come," said the pastor, "according to our custom at the close of another year of your life, to return thanks to you for all the kindness you have shown us during that period, and we bring the lieutenant with us; we fell in with him on the road, and like a true cavalry soldier he has gone first to the stable to look after his horse."

"He has come," said Madame von Wendenstein with joy. "I feared he might not get leave."

The door opened hastily, and with quick steps and jingling spurs Lieutenant von Wendenstein hastened to his mother, who embraced him warmly, whilst he kissed her hand. He then went to his father, who kissed him on the cheeks and gazed with pride on the handsome young man as he stood before him with his upright military bearing.

"I am late," said the lieutenant, "because we have so much to do. My comrades desire me to say they will all come to congratulate you to-morrow, dear father, if possible, but we have an immense amount of work of all kinds. The yearly exercises are to take place earlier, the order has come quite suddenly, and you can imagine how much extra work this has given us."

After the lieutenant had shaken hands affectionately with his brother, he turned to his sisters and the pastor's daughter, and began a lively conversation with the three young girls and the auditor von Bergfeld, which was frequently interrupted by merry laughter, while the pastor with the president and his eldest son, joined Madame von Wendenstein at the large table before the sofa.

"It is very unusual," said the president, "this hastening of the exercises, of which my son spoke, and which I had before seen in the newspapers. Foreign affairs are not my province, and I generally trouble myself little about them, but how this measure can assist in the present grave crisis I do not understand."

"It is an exceptional means," replied his son, with the air of one of the initiated, "used to meet a complicated embarrassment. The quarrel between Prussia and Austria grows sharper every day, and the German governments desire a mobilization of the confederacy's contingencies.

Prussia on the other hand requires strict neutrality, and the manœuvres have been hastened to avoid the mobilization, and yet to have the troops in readiness should war break out."

"With all respect for your ministerial wisdom," replied his father, jokingly, "I cannot see what good it will do. If Prussia requires neutrality she will be as much hurt and disquieted by this irregularity as by mobilization itself, though the military preparations for actual war are much less complete, and Austria and her allies will see in this a withdrawal from their common interests. My opinion is, a decision should be made one way or the other. If war does not break out—as I still hope—nothing is lost, and if it comes, we have at least on one side a support and a strong position. What troubles me," he added thoughtfully and gravely, "I do not love the Prussians; we Hanoverians, from old wounds, feel little sympathy with Prussia. I regret that our army has been taken out of the old Hanoverian uniform, and put into a Prussian-like one; I regret still more that Herr von Beningsen and his national unionists have so completely brought us under Prussian ideas; but still I should prefer that we remained on a good footing with our great and dangerous neighbour, and that we joined in no hare-brained enterprise with Austria, in whom I have no confidence, and who has never done us or Germany any good; above all things, I would not that we, in our dangerously-exposed position, should sit upon two stools, and yet," he said, pausing, "that is what our rulers are doing. Our foreign minister, Count Platen, I do not know; I met him once in Hanover, and he appeared to be an affable and agreeable man, but Bacmeister I do know, and I know his character and his intellect,—what does he say to this measure?"

The government assessor cleared his throat and replied, "These things belong entirely to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the War Office. I do not know whether the measure has been discussed in a general council, certainly I have not heard my chief express his opinion, but he is always careful not to commit himself on any subject. In Hanover they quite believe hostilities will not really take place."

"God grant they may be right," cried the pastor with a sigh, "a German war! what a frightful misfortune, and I know not on which side my sympathy would lie; however the war ended, one of the two great German rivals would preponderate. I cannot wish for papist Austria with her Croatsians, Pandurs and Slaves; my own personal feeling draws me to our northern brothers, with whom we have so much in common, but that Prussian influence should be all-powerful in Germany without any counterpoise, I cannot certainly desire; from Berlin came the Rationalism now threatening the whole Protestant Church with its dangerous indifference. May God direct and enlighten our king that he may choose aright, and preserve the pure Lutheran church in our beloved Hanover."

"Yes, God grant us peace! for this I pray daily," said Madame von Wendenstein, looking anxiously at her youngest son, whose merry laugh had just been heard from the group of young people established in the window. "What sorrow, what misery war brings to every family, and what end is to be gained? Greater weight in the political scale for one or another power: I think if everyone would strive to make his own household and his own immediate circle better and happier the world would be more improved than by struggling after things which can give no true happiness to a single human being."

"There we have my true housewife," laughed the president; "what does not concern her house, her cellar, and her kitchen, is useless and pernicious, and according to her views statesmen should turn into a large family circle, and politics be thrown into the lumber-room."

"And is not my honoured friend right?" said the pastor, smiling at Madame von Wendenstein; "is it not woman's duty to work for peace, and to cherish the seed we sow in the Lord's temple, that it may flower and bring forth fruit in the house? God gives to the mighty ones of the earth the right to draw the sword he has placed in their hand, they must do their duty and answer for it afterwards; but I believe the Eternal Father has more joy in the peaceful happiness of a united home than in the most talented combinations of policy, or the bloody laurels of the battle-field."

"Well," said the president, "we cannot alter the course of events, so let us think of nourishing our own bodies; that will, I am sure, do us all good."

The old servant had thrown open two large folding-doors on one side of the drawing-room, and the spacious dining-room, with a table ready laid and lighted with massive silver branches, appeared, whilst a most appetizing odour of cookery invited everyone to enter and partake.

The president rose. The pastor gave his arm to the lady of the house, and led her to the dining-room, followed by the rest of the party, who were soon seated around the table in the plainly-furnished room ornamented with stags' antlers and deer's heads, enjoying the excellent dinner provided by the house steward, and the choice specimens of the treasures in the cellars. There was plenty of cheerful conversation, but nothing was said about politics.

In the meantime there was great excitement in one of the principal houses of the semi-circular village, usually so quiet. The large hall, the door of which was wide open, was brightly lighted and filled with different groups of young peasant men and maidens in their best Sunday costumes; the strongly-built young fellows wore jackets and hats trimmed with fur, the maidens short, close-fitting dresses and white handkerchiefs, with bright-coloured ribbons in their thick plaits of hair.

Fresh guests continually arrived and joined the young people already assembled, while the other inhabitants of the village, the older peasants and children, walked up and down, and looked in at their young friends.

Old farmer Deyke, one of the principal farmers of the Blechow estate, a widower for some years, inhabited the large farm-house with his only son Fritz. He went from group to group, and his old rigid, sharply-marked countenance, with its cunning, piercing dark eyes, beneath bushy eyebrows, showed itself capable of very different expressions. Now it assumed jocular good nature, as he pressed the hand of a rich farmer's son and whispered in his ear some tale of his own youth; now his face expressed benevolent condescension, as he said an encouraging word to a poorer neighbour; now cold reserve as he returned the salutation of some young man not quite in good repute in the neighbourhood, but whom he was too hospitable not to entertain on such an occasion.

His son Fritz went about amongst his friends with much less dignity. He was a slight but strong young man, with kind, true blue eyes, and flaxen hair cut short in the military fashion. He joked with the girls, and must have said very merry things, for they put their heads together, and laughed and tittered, until they got

red in the face, long after the old farmer's merry son had left them and gone on to another group; and then he went up to the young men, and seizing two of them under the arms, led them to the table at one end of the hall covered with a white cloth, and crowded with beer-jugs, hams, bread, and cold beef. It was evident that Fritz was immensely popular.

He was very good-looking, beloved by young and old, and as the only son and heir of the rich Deyke, the holder of the largest farm in the neighbourhood, all the pretty girls belonging to the best peasant families looked after him with beating hearts and unspoken hopes, and there was no father or mother in the village but would have received him as a son-in-law with the greatest joy.

But he was unscathed amongst all these pretty peasant girls; he joked and laughed with them all, danced with them all at country festivities, gave first one and then another a bouquet from his father's well-kept garden, or a ribbon or a picture from the store of some travelling dealer, and these gifts raised the hopes of the pretty Blechow girls; but he never went any further, or seemed to see the kind looks of the daughters, or to notice the encouraging hints of the fathers and mothers. None of the young men felt jealous of him, he was never a rival, he took every opportunity of treating his young friends, and spent the thalers, with which his father plentifully supplied him, quite as much on their pleasures as on his own.

The young people all made way, and left the centre of the hall free as the village schoolmaster entered, a simple-looking old man, in a black coat and a black cocked hat.

The elder Deyke greeted him in a manner that showed he respected the position and character of his guest, but

felt himself a person of much greater importance, but his son hastily seized his old master's hand, and cried : " We are all ready, Herr Niemeyer, and it is time to go to the castle ; the president sat down to dinner half an hour ago, and it will be another half hour before we are all there and prepared, so forwards ! forwards ! "

He quickly arranged all the young people in couples, first the young men, then the girls, and to each young man he gave a pine-wood torch from a large heap which lay ready on one side of the hall, and some matches for lighting them. He then seized the arm of the school-master, and with his father they headed the procession, which silently moved towards the castle, whilst the older villagers looked on with interest, and then followed, whispering together.

The president's cheerful dinner had come to an end. The old butler removed the cover of an enormous Saxony china bowl standing on a side table, from which came the delightful aroma of Scharzhofberger Moselle, mingled with the perfume of the pine-apple slices floating in the wine. He uncorked some bottles of Champagne, poured the contents into the bowl, put in the large silver ladle, and placed it on the table before the president, who, after tasting and approving the mixture, filled large glasses for all his guests.

The pastor raised his glass, inhaled the delicious fragrance for a moment with visible respect, admired the light bright yellow colour, and then spoke in a way happily combining the clergyman with the old friend of the family :

" My dear friends ! our worthy president, around whose hospitable board we are now assembled, enters to-morrow upon a new year of his active and useful life. To-morrow we shall greet the new year ; to-day let us

take leave of the past. The cares and troubles it brought our friend are over, and have only led to good; the happiness he has bestowed on so many, the cheerful hours he has caused, should be remembered to strengthen and refresh him in the evil moments the future will bring even to him, as to all the dwellers on the earth, as long as darkness and light wrestle together. May the remembrance of the past year urge us all to continue true to one another in love and friendship. Let us dedicate this quiet glass to the memory of the past year of our dear president's life." And putting his glass to his lips, he emptied it to the dregs.

They all followed his example, the ladies not excepted, for from the simple, healthy life they led, they did not fear a glass of generous wine as the more delicate specimens of the fair sex usually do in large cities.

"God grant, my friends, that at the close of the next year, which looks so threatening, we may all be sitting here as happy and as cheerful as we are now," said the president, with emotion in his face and voice; "and now," he added cheerfully, as he felt general conversation could not be again resumed, "let us rise and smoke the pipe of peace. John, bring the bowl, we will have another word with that."

The whole party rose and returned to the drawing-room. They found the doors leading into the hall set open; the enormous house-door was also thrown wide open, so that they saw right into the courtyard, with the old linden-tree in the midst. It was lighted up with dark red flames, and amidst the masses of smoke which here and there interrupted the fiery waves, groups of men appeared, their movements looking strangely fantastic in the reflections of the flames, and from them came the sound of whispering voices.

The president was amazed and even alarmed, for his first idea was that a fire had broken out in his stables ; but the old servant stepped up to him and whispered : "The young people from the village wish to serenade you, sir, the evening before your birthday."

The president, who had been about to hasten into the courtyard, paused, a look of happy emotion shining in his eyes. The pastor, who was prepared for the surprise, exchanged a smile with the lady of the house, and the young people gazed inquisitively into the courtyard.

After the president appeared, there was a moment of deep silence ; then strong, clear voices raised the simple touching chorale, " Oh ! God, our help in ages past."

" Wer nun den lieben Gott lässt walten."

The full ringing sounds, and the dark red light of the torches streamed through the large hall and entered the room where the family stood, while from the large window on the garden side the full moon shone brightly in from the dark evening sky, and shed long streams of light upon the floor.

The president stood still, surrounded by those he loved in his quiet home, the calm light of the moon falling upon him, as if it were the farewell greeting of the past year. Was the uncertain, blood-red light filling the courtyard the picture of the coming year ? Yet from the fiery light came the old pious hymn which has so often strengthened and comforted men's hearts. Let the Future come ; if she brings strife and sorrow, she will also bring strength and consolation.

Such thoughts as these passed through the mind of the president. His wife, who had placed herself beside him, had folded her hands together and slightly bowed her head.

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope in years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home,"¹

resounded. The old lady gazed at her soldier-son, whose eyes shone with pleasure at the picturesque effect produced by the torchlight on the groups of peasants, and on the buildings around the court. Her hands were more tightly clasped, her lips moved in silent prayer, and a tear ran slowly down her cheek; then she bent her head lower, and listened without moving to the end of the chorale.

When the sounds had quite died away, a general movement commenced. Old Deyke and the schoolmaster entered; and the former said, in his most important and dignified manner, the schoolmaster standing meekly behind him: "Herr President, the young people have had the honour of welcoming your approaching birthday by a serenade; the schoolmaster has instructed them"—(he looked round, and the poor man bowed shyly, trying not to feel as if all eyes were upon him). "They came and consulted me, and I saw no objection; for, Herr President, you are well aware the whole village feels interested in your family festival; yes, and we know you rejoice that we should show how much we have your happiness and that of your worthy family at heart. My only anxiety was lest the sudden commotion before the house might"—and he turned to Madame von Wendenstein—"alarm your honoured lady; but the school-

¹ "Wer nun den lieben Gott lässt walten,
Und hoffet auf Ihn allezeit,
Den wird Er wunderbar erhalten,
In aller Noth und Fährlichkeit."

master said it must be a surprise, or the whole point would be lost."

"Thank you—thank you all from my whole heart. My good old Deyke!" exclaimed the president, warmly shaking his hand, "you have given me the greatest pleasure, and such an alarm as this will never injure my wife."

"Certainly not," said Madame von Wendenstein, whose face had recovered all its quiet cheerfulness. She offered the old peasant her small white hand, which he took with a certain amount of care, and added: "I thank you heartily for your affection to my husband."

"But where is Fritz?" cried the lieutenant. "I have been surprised not to see him; eh! old Deyke, where is my old playmate?"

"Here, Herr Lieutenant," cried young Deyke's cheerful voice, as the handsome young peasant stepped from a dark corner of the hall and entered the sitting-room. "I am very glad you are here, sir, and that you remember me."

Whilst the lieutenant warmly greeted the young peasant, his elder brother shook hands with old Deyke, with a certain stiff politeness, and the president cried:

"Now, every one must eat and drink in the courtyard. It is the young people's turn to be pleased. It must never be said that my friends, after giving me so much pleasure, went away with empty mouths."

Madame von Wendenstein gave her eldest daughter a sign, and soon all the servants in the house were hastily carrying tables, white cloths, plates, jugs, and bottles into the courtyard.

The schoolmaster, however, whispered something to old Deyke, who said, "Herr President, the schoolmaster begs your kind entertainment may be put off until the

other songs are sung, as he fears the voices will not be in such good order afterwards !”

“Are you going to sing to us again?” cried the president, with pleasure. “Pray go on then, Herr Niemeyer. Sit down with us, my dear Deyke, and let us drink a glass to old times !”

He had some arm-chairs rolled into the middle of the room, and made the old peasant sit with the pastor and himself. The lieutenant fetched some cigars ; the eldest son filled the glasses. The old peasant moistened his cigar with his lips, and smoked it with carefully screwed-up mouth. He knocked his glass against the president's and the pastor's, half emptied it, with a satisfied nod at its contents ; then he sat very upright on his chair, with a look which showed he was sensible what a high honour it was to sit in such company, as well as the conviction that he was quite the man on whom such honour should fall.

The schoolmaster and young Deyke had hastened out again, and soon the simple but beautiful *volkslied* of the country commenced.

Madame von Wendenstein returned to her place on the sofa, and listened thoughtfully to the melodious sounds ; her eldest son stepped, with Herr von Bergfeld, into a window-niche ; the president's youngest daughter had followed her sister ; the lieutenant walked up and down the room, listening to the singing with some impatience ; for he longed to go out to the young peasants, whom he had known from childhood, and joke and laugh with them.

The pastor's daughter, forsaken by her young friends, stepped out on to the terrace. She leant against the stone balustrade and looked up at the moon ; its silvery rays fell on her thoughtful, beautiful face, and lighted up her large clear eyes.

After the lieutenant had paced up and down the room several times, he, too, went on to the terrace. He breathed in the fresh evening air, looked at the well-known plain below as it lay in the moonlight, and then perceived the young girl, whom he hastened to join.

"Are you indulging in romantic dreams in the moonlight, Miss Helena?" he cried, jokingly. "May I share them, or is it needful to be quite alone?"

"The moon always makes me come out, whether I will or not," said Helena, "and the singing sounds even better here. But I was dreaming a little," she said, laughingly, as she raised herself from the stone balustrade; "my thoughts were far away from here, up in the clouds," and she pointed with her hand to a black bank of clouds, stretching from the horizon towards the moon, whose light touched their edges with silver. They looked like a black mantle with a brilliant hem.

"I know your thoughts go far and wide, and I like to hear them, for they take me to a world I love, but to which I cannot go alone. You remember the old story of the wonderful garden no one could enter unless they knew the magic word which opened the door in the rock? you know this word. Even as a child I was never happier than when listening to your ideas; they took me so far away from every-day life. Tell me what you and the clouds have been talking about."

"Do you see," said the young girl, as she looked upwards, "do you see that black cloud resting so quietly in the moonlight? An image of peace, you might almost believe it had ever been there, and would ever remain; yet in a short time the cloud has spread itself far, far over the country—will it bring blessing and fruitfulness, or will it spread tempest and destruction over the land, destroying the hopes of the husbandman? Who can tell?"

but we know it will move away from the light now so peacefully shining upon it, though the moon will shine on as it has ever done. Such is life; such is the fate of man," she added, in a melancholy tone; "now we are in happy peace; soon we may feel the wild tempest."

"Your thoughts are always sad," said the lieutenant, with a slight smile, whilst a reflection of the young girl's enthusiasm appeared in his face, "always grave, but always beautiful; but I cannot imagine," he added, "how such ideas come to you."

"How can I help it?" she returned, "when they talk so much of war, and the threatening future; how soon our peaceful happiness may vanish like the moon if the cloud rises higher!"

The young officer looked grave, and was silent for a moment.

"How extraordinary!" he then said. "War is my business, and I have always wished for a brisk, merry war, instead of our tiresome garrison life; but what you say makes me sorry. Are we soldiers the black cloud which is to blot out the moon's peaceful light, to spread tempest and destruction, and to annihilate so many hopes? And may not the lightning resting in the cloud's bosom smite even ourselves?"

"Oh! that it were granted to human power to guide the course of clouds and the fate of men to light and peace," cried the pastor's daughter; "but as the moonlight silvers the black cloud, so must our hopes and prayers accompany those whom the storm of fate drives far away; such comfort will remain for those at home."

The lieutenant was silent. His eyes were fixed with dreamy surprise on the young girl's excited face, which looked almost inspired in the moonlight. He slowly approached her; but the singing ceased, loud voices and

clanging glasses were heard in the court. The other young ladies came on to the terrace, and the lieutenant and Helena hastily joined them.

The president went into the hall, and again thanked the singers heartily for the pleasure they had given him, proposing they should now attack the refreshments. The whole party then mixed with the peasants, and cheerful talking and merry laughter were heard throughout the courtyard.

The lieutenant had gone into the drawing-room, and he remained there for a time grave and thoughtful, though his sister and Helena had gone to say a few friendly words to all the village maidens.

His elder brother went to the young peasants; he knew quite well what to say to them, for he had been brought up amongst them, and they talked to him without reserve: but it was somewhat of a ceremonious conversation which he carried on in a quiet voice, as he moved from group to group.

Loud bursts of laughter, however, accompanied the lieutenant, when he entered the courtyard shortly afterwards. Accompanied by Fritz Deyke, he spoke to all the young fellows, who, for a joke, arranged themselves in the stiffest of military attitudes, under the auspices of some old cavalry soldiers.

All was life and mirth. At last the lieutenant was surrounded by some young folks, who made Fritz Deyke their spokesman. The lieutenant laughed when he heard their request, nodded his head, and went up to his father.

"They want to sing our Hanoverian air, father, but they wish for your consent: they are not sure if it is quite the thing, they say."

"If it is the thing?" cried the president, cheerfully, "of course it is; let them begin!"

Fritz Deyke, who had followed the lieutenant, hurried back to his friends. They formed a semicircle before the door of the house, and the curious song began, the words of which are scarcely comprehensible, and often altered *ad libitum*, but which it is the dear delight of every Hanoverian peasant and soldier to sing on every opportunity.

The president was delighted to hear the national song shouted by the merry young peasants with all the strength of their lungs. He joined in the chorus himself, as did the lieutenant, and

“ Our king before us we did see,
Riding straight on so merrilie;
And to his brigadier cried he,
‘ Roystering Hanover boys are we,’ ”¹

was loudly echoed back from the old castle walls to Blechow.

At last the peasants dispersed, and with loud laughter and cheerful conversation returned to the village. The pastor and his daughter also took leave, and went back to the quiet vicarage. Soon the whole castle was hushed in peace and darkness.

Madame von Wendenstein kissed her youngest son affectionately, as she bid him good-night, and her lips softly murmured,

“ O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope in years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.”

The lieutenant sat thinking in silence for a long time

¹ “ Da sah'n wir von Weiten,
Unsern König schon reiten;
Er rief nach seinem Brigadier,
‘ Lustige Hannoveraner seien wir.’ ”

in an ancient arm-chair in his room ; and when at last he went to bed and to sleep, he dreamt he was on a black cloud, whirled along by a tempest ; the lightning flashed about him, the thunder groaned, and he was borne farther and farther from the mild rays of the moon, though she still pursued him with her peaceful light.





CHAPTER III.

VIENNA.

A NUMBER of carriages rolled rapidly along the Ballhofplatz behind the royal castle of Hofburg in Vienna, and drew up one after another before the brilliantly lighted portal of the Office of State. Fashionable equipages, with servants in various liveries, arrived; the porter, in his light blue coat embroidered with gold and with his long staff, hurried to receive the ladies who alighted in rich evening dress, well wrapped up in their warm mantles and hoods; they hastened through the large doorway, mounted the broad staircase to the right and entered the upper apartments of the splendid palace in which Kaunitz and Metternich had striven to prove the words true, *Austria est imperatura orbi universo*. It was now occupied by Lieutenant Field Marshal Mensdorff-Pouilly, minister of the empire and of foreign affairs.

Amongst the carriages there were a number of *fesche* (cabs); they are always used by the gentlemen of Vienna to go about in, in the town, however extensive their own stables, and the porter received them with the same alacrity that he bestowed on the occupants of the more fashionable carriages.

A young officer got out of one of these cabs dressed in the brilliant variegated Uhlan uniform of green and scarlet glittering with gold. He threw off his large white cloak, left it in the carriage, and desired the coachman to wait for him near the Burgplatz.

He gave a last look at his faultless costume, drew his small black moustache through his fingers, and then mounted the stairs happy and confident of success, as a young Uhlan officer always is, whether on the parquet or on horseback, and which this especial young officer had every reason to expect.

Lieutenant von Stielow, a native of Mecklenburg, had, like many of his northern compatriots, entered the Austrian service several years before; about a twelve-month ago an uncle had died childless, and he had inherited from him such a considerable fortune, that his yearly income had excited astonishment even amongst the Austrian nobility, who are accustomed to enormous revenues; and the extremely handsome and amiable young man, who had formerly been treated with cold politeness, was now welcomed by the highest nobility of Vienna as an intimate friend, especially in those houses where there were daughters of an age to marry.

It was, then, only natural that the young man before whom life was opening so brilliantly should be full of joyful confidence as he mounted the steps of the Office of State. This was on one of the exclusive evenings, when the Countess Mensdorff, in contradistinction to her large official receptions, entertained her own especial friends. These evenings, though of a strictly private nature, were much frequented by the political world; here it was hoped a corner of the veil might be raised, in which each diplomatic camp had shrouded its activity, trusting the world might believe nothing was taking

place which could disturb its happy relations with its neighbours.

Footmen, in the faultlessly elegant Mensdorff livery, opened the doors leading to the smaller rooms inhabited by the countess, and Lieutenant von Stielow entered a salon filled with ladies in fresh and varied toilettes and gentlemen in brilliant uniforms, or in the black civilian evening dress.

In a smaller room, opening out of the larger apartment, and filled with the thousand comfortable trifles found in the everyday drawing-room of a lady of rank, the minister's wife, by birth a Princess Dietrichstein, sat on a low divan. Her appearance was highly aristocratic, and she received her guests with the naturally graceful and friendly manner peculiar to distinguished society in Vienna.

Beside the Countess Mensdorff sat a full, luxuriant form in black, but the brilliancy of the wearer's priceless jewellery excluded all idea of mourning.

This lady's pale face, set off by masses of black hair, was of unusual beauty, though deeply melancholy; her large black eyes, full of fire and expression, shone with no earthly happiness; their enthusiastic, thoughtful look recalled rather the old portraits of the high-born abbesses of some religious order.

She was the Princess Obrenowitsch, wedded to Prince Michael of Servia, but being separated from her husband, she lived in Vienna with her young son. This beautiful lady, by birth a Countess Huniady, was received with open arms by the highest society in Vienna, notwithstanding her separation from her husband, who took every opportunity of expressing his great esteem for her; but though she inherited the warm Hungarian blood, and possessed genius and health, she led, without entirely

renouncing the world, a life of great seclusion, and devoted all her talents and care to the education of her young son, the heir of the princely house of Servia. It was always an event when the beautiful, proud, and pious princess quitted her seclusion and appeared in one of the salons of Vienna.

Before these ladies stood a somewhat short gentleman, of about sixty years of age. He wore the close-fitting grey uniform of a lieutenant field marshal, and was decorated with the Maria Theresa Cross, the Order of Leopold, and the Maltese Cross. His full red face, set on an unusually short neck, which looked the more remarkable from his closely-buttoned uniform, had an expression of inexhaustible fun and mirth; his dark eyes sparkled with life and good-natured satire; both his short moustache and thick hair were white as snow, the latter shorn so closely that the red tint showed through the bristly locks, and caused society in Vienna to maintain that Field Marshal Reischach's head looked like a very well-sugared strawberry.

Baron Reischach, one of the bravest officers in the Austrian army, was now incapable of active service from the many wounds he had received over his whole body; though they often caused him acute suffering, he was regarded in Vienna as a most cheerful member of society, to whom it seemed almost possible to be in two places at once, so completely did he see all that was to be seen, and know all that was to be known; his amusing stories and witty observations always banished ennui from every réunion where he appeared.

During a round of afternoon visits Baron Reischach was sure to be met with more than once, for he never neglected the old ladies of his acquaintance, and frequently called on them to inquire after their health, relate

all the news of the day, and to show them all sorts of small attentions. In the evening he was to be found at the Burg Theatre, and between the acts he was always to be seen in the boxes of the older ladies, yet he managed to find time to slip behind the scenes and to compliment the *prime donne* on their toilettes or their acting. After the theatre he was always in some salon, now hurrying through some large "at home," bandying a *bon-mot* here, relating a witty anecdote there, then for a quarter of an hour he might be found at the tea-table of some small circle, shaking from his inexhaustible cornucopia the most amusing stories. Later still, he was to be found in a corner of the dining-room of the Stadt Frankfurt Hotel, beside a glass of old Hungarian wine, the life and soul of some merry supper, the body consisting of Counts Wallis, Fuchs, and Wrba.

Such was Lieutenant Field Marshal Reischach, who now stood before the ladies, holding his green plumed hat in his hand which rested on his sword.

He was telling them something very amusing, for Countess Mensdorff laughed aloud, and a smile passed over even the grave face of the Servian princess.

"Now you must tell us, Baron Reischach," said the Countess Mensdorff, "everything you saw last night at the theatre—not how Wolter acted, we know in your eyes she is always superb, incomparable; but tell us what you observed in the house and the boxes. I am sure a great deal went on, or did *not* go on, that you can relate. You see you have made the princess smile already, make her laugh outright."

The baron replied, with a slight bow to the Princess Obrenowitsch: "I dare hardly hope the princess will listen much longer to an old worldling like myself, especially as *nothing* happened. Our young Mecklenburg

Uhlán passed some time in the Countess Frankenstein's box, talking with great animation to Countess Clara, and thereby enraging one of our friends. I need not tell her name, I saw——"

Here his confidences were interrupted by the arrival of their subject, the young Uhlán officer, von Stielow, who advanced to pay his respects to Countess Mensdorff.

She laughed. "We were speaking of you, Baron Stielow; it was easy to see, this evening, at the theatre, it was not Wolter who engrossed your attention, which Herr von Reischach regards as a great mistake."

The young officer coloured slightly, saluted the field marshal, and said: "His excellency is a sharp observer. I was only a very short time at the Burg Theatre, and I visited some friends in their boxes."

The repartee Herr von Reischach was about to make, was prevented by the arrival of a tall gentleman in a general's uniform, accompanied by a slender, graceful lady, and as they came up to speak to the countess, Herr von Stielow seized the opportunity of escaping further discussion.

It was Count Clam Gallas, with his wife, Countess Mensdorff's younger sister. The count's tall form had not the perfect ease in uniform possessed by the great Austrian nobles, his features were completely of the Hapsburg type, and he was decorated with the Golden Fleece; he offered his hand to his sister-in-law with simple cordiality; whilst his wife, whose figure was unusually elegant, and her beauty extraordinarily preserved, though she was no longer young, sank into an arm-chair beside Princess Obrenowitsch.

"Where is Mensdorff?" asked Count Clam Gallas, "I do not see him; he is surely not ill again?"

"He was sent for by the emperor," replied the

countess; "and, though he has come back, he has something to despatch. I have had to offer his excuses; but we shall not have to wait for him much longer."

"I have heard wonders of your fête in Prague, countess," said the baron, turning to the Countess Clam Gallas, "they cannot praise it enough; Countess Waldstein, whom I met to-day, at Princess Lori Schwarzenberg's, has been quite enchanted."

"Yes, it was quite a success," said the countess, "and gave us all much pleasure. We had the idea," she continued, turning to Princess Obrenowitsch, "of performing Wallenstein's 'Camp in Prague;' of course, it has been so often performed before, there is nothing remarkable about that. The extraordinary thing was that the actors in this play, in which Schiller brings Wallenstein's army so wonderfully before us, were really direct descendants of the great leaders in the Thirty Years' War. This gave an unusual meaning, and an unusual spirit to the representation. I assure you we were all inspired by a breath from the past, both performers and audience felt the same vivid emotion. The ancient mighty spirit of Austria seemed to rise up before us, clashing its arms, and a blast from the Swedish horns would have made the whole company cry 'To horse!' and have sent them to ride forth like their ancestors."

"Yes," said Count Clam Gallas, "it made a wonderful impression on all of us—we all felt that the time will come, if it be God's will, when the Austrian sword must again be drawn, and our emperor restored to his old position. It looks to me as if the times were stormy, and we should soon ride forth."

There was a moment's pause. Herr von Reischach looked grave and was silent; when foreign policy and warlike action were spoken of, it grieved his true old

soldier's heart, that he, with his hacked and shattered limbs, could no longer take a part.

Countess Mensdorff, whose fine tact always prevented political discussions in her drawing-room, broke the short silence by observing to von Reischach with a smile:

"It is a pity you were not there, Baron Reischach, you would have performed the Capuchin excellently, and preached the moral to the wicked world."

"Certainly," said he, and added in a tone of comic pathos: "*Contenti estote*, be satisfied with your ammunition bread."

"Yes, but if a *pâté de foie gras* came first, and a bottle of old Hungarian wine," laughed the count, "he would leave the ammunition bread alone."

"*Nullum vinum*," cried Herr von Reischach, stretching out his hand, and shaking his head, "*nisi Hungaricum!*" he added in a lower tone, bowing to the Princess Obrenowitsch, who thanked him by a slight smile for the compliment paid her in her native tongue.

Other guests arrived, the circle of ladies increased, and Count Clam Gallas and Baron Reischach withdrew, still conversing, into the outer salon.

Here groups of ladies and gentlemen were talking with much animation; the younger people busy about their own affairs, the elder ladies watching the proceedings of their daughters, and the gentlemen casting searching glances at the different members of the *corps diplomatique*, who now exchanged a hasty word, now lingered in earnest conversation.

In the middle of the room, beneath the brilliant chandelier, stood the French ambassador, the Duke de Gramont, a tall man, with a faultless figure and military bearing, with the white star of the Legion of Honour upon his black coat, and the broad red ribbon across his breast.

Short black whiskers framed his long, well-chiselled face, of the type of the old French aristocracy, combining amiable friendliness with dignified reserve. His small, beautifully-shaped mouth was slightly shaded by a moustache, the points of which were turned upwards; his brow was high and broad, but gently rounded rather than boldly arched; in his dark eyes shone the careless indifference which is always the heritage of the old French *noblesse*, and which in so many phases of their history has caused them to treat the gravest and most important subjects with a lightness and frivolity difficult to understand. The arrangement of his abundant dark hair gave him a still greater resemblance to one of those old grand seigneurs who, in the palmy days of the monarchy, surrounded by pomp and stiff park alleys, led their careless, graceful lives so easily.

The duke was standing for a moment alone, examining those around, when he was joined by a gentleman of middle age, who, far from possessing the French ambassador's careless and distinguished repose, was chiefly remarkable for the rapid changes of expression seen on his thin, strongly-marked face. He wore whiskers, and his light hair was cut and arranged in the way peculiar to the North German soldier. He was shorter than the duke, his movements were animated, his dress of faultless simplicity, and across his breast he wore the white and orange ribbon of the Prussian order of the Red Eagle.

Herr von Werther, the Prussian ambassador, greeted the duke with much courtesy, but not with the cordiality which expresses personal friendship.

"At last, duke," said Herr von Werther, in French, "I am able to wish you good evening. How is the duchess? I do not see her."

"She has a bad cold," replied the ambassador. "And

Madame von Werther, she, too, has to remain in the house from this influenza?"

"She is very unwell, and I should not have come out myself," said Herr von Werther, with a smile, "if it were not our duty to collect news."

"And have you succeeded?" asked the duke.

"Not yet. Count Mensdorff is still with the emperor, the countess tells me; and I have heard nothing, except a few *cancans* from the guests. But," he added gravely, and in a lower voice, "the air seems to me full of important events. You are well aware that the general feeling grows stronger and stronger."

"I regret that it is so," said the Duke de Gramont; "for such sharp opposition of conflicting views and claims can only lead to war. Personally, this appears to me very undesirable."

"You know," replied Herr von Werther, "that we certainly do not wish for war; but can we avoid it, without sacrificing our dignity and our position? What would you advise?"

"We are completely out of the contention, we can only observe what takes place," said the duke, in a tone of reserve; "and we can only wish well to both sides: it would not become us to give advice, unless, indeed, we were asked to mediate. Do you not see," he added, with a forced smile, "that we are observed? We are rather isolated just here, and our harmless conversation may give rise——"

"You are quite right," interrupted Herr von Werther; "let us avoid these inquisitive eyes."

With a slight bow to the duke, and whispering to himself, "He knows nothing," he turned to a tall, strongly-built old gentleman, with a bald forehead, sharp features, and bright brown eyes, who stood a

few paces off, dressed in the uniform of a Hanoverian general.

"Good evening, General Knesebeck," he said, whilst the general politely returned his greeting; "what news do you hear from Hanover?"

"None at all for some time past," replied the general slowly, with some reserve. "My brother lives quietly in the country; he writes to me but seldom, and troubles himself very little about events in Hanover."

"I rejoice," continued Herr von Werther, "that Count Platen has been to Berlin, as I hear the visit was of a most friendly nature. God grant that this may continue, and that all the little misunderstandings may vanish which have arisen between Prussia and Hanover, two states who really heartily esteem each other, as history and the traditions of the Seven Years' War amply prove."

"From my heart I regret the misunderstandings which have arisen on both sides," replied General von Knesebeck. "We in Hanover ardently wish to live in peace with our neighbours; but, before all things, we must labour to maintain the integrity of all the German states. Our safety, both from within and from without, depends on the friendship of the two great German powers, and on the united strength of the German confederation. God preserve them!"

A further remark from Herr von Werther was prevented by the approach of the English ambassador, Lord Bloomfield. He had the regular features and characteristic countenance of the English aristocracy, with a healthy complexion and a fresh, genial expression. He was decorated with the ribbon of the Scotch order of the Thistle; and after he joined in the conversation, it turned to the every-day events of society in Vienna.

Thus the soirée in Countess Mensdorff's salons ran its course with its usual smoothness, for the elegant and smiling guests betrayed none of the restless anxiety which possessed the minds of many of those present. On the other side of the Office of State in the meantime, in the large ante-room of the minister's cabinet, with its furniture of blue silk and blue window hangings, sat two men in great arm-chairs, by the large round table near the wall. A small fire flickered in the large fireplace in the corner, and an enormous lamp with its globe of ground glass stood on the table, leaving a large part of the spacious room in half darkness, but lighting up the two men who were close to it very distinctly, whilst it shed a faint reflected light on the life-size portrait of the Emperor Francis Joseph, which in a magnificent gold frame filled up the middle of the wall, and represented the emperor in the full uniform of a general, with the youthful beauty of the early age when he ascended the throne.

One of these men sat carelessly leaning back in his arm-chair. He was apparently half-way between fifty and sixty. His face bore the impress of considerable talent, with a certain mixture of catholic enthusiasm and repression, sometimes seen in old portraits of cardinals and prelates. An apparent love of ease, small soft white hands, a comfortable and elegant dress, completed the resemblance to the portraits of the spiritual lords of the Italian school.

Such was the privy councillor and under secretary of state, Baron von Meysenbug, and beside him sat the ministerial councillor von Biegeleben, a tall, stiff, dry pedantic looking person, with a very bilious complexion and bureaucratic manner. He looked half-way between a professor and the manager of a counting-house, as he sat upright on his chair with his hat in his hand.

"The count is long in coming," cried Herr von Meysenbug impatiently, as he tapped with his slender fingers on the dark table-cover. "I am very anxious—I fear, I fear he may yet play us a trick and persuade the emperor to yield!"

"I cannot think it," observed Herr von Biegeleben in a slow, quiet voice; "his majesty is too much penetrated with the idea of the former position of Hapsburg in Germany to dream of falling in with the desires of Berlin. In Frankfort he saw the glorious recollections of the empire live again, and he felt deeply and bitterly the checkmate prepared for him by Prussian resistance; he will be firm."

"But Count Mensdorff will resign, he will not be answerable for the consequences of a rupture!" said von Meysenbug, thoughtfully.

"Well, and if he does?" asked Herr von Biegeleben with a stiff smile; "the emperor will then perhaps proceed with more quickness and decision."

"Perhaps so," said Herr von Meysenbug; "but Count Mensdorff is of a reliant disposition and requires advice; should we hold the reins so completely in our hands under his successor?"

"I do not think we could be dispensed with," said von Biegeleben. "Your excellency stands so firm on the Roman basis it would be impossible to set you aside; I, for my unimportant self—well, who have we who knows and can work all the German embarrassments? Herr von Gagern?"

Herr von Meysenbug shrugged his shoulders and made a slight movement with his hand.

At this moment the door of the ante-room opened and Count Mensdorff entered.

There was nothing extraordinary in the appearance of

this minister, whose fate it was to guide Austria to such great disaster. He was a man of middle height, of regular and pleasing features of the French type, and of a complexion that showed ill-health; his short hair and small moustache were black. He wore the uniform of a lieutenant field marshal and the star of the order of Leopold. In consequence of chronic illness his manner was feeble and uncertain, and he endeavoured to avoid standing during a conversation, as it fatigued him.

Both the gentlemen rose.

After greeting them Count Mensdorff said: "I regret that I have kept you waiting, gentlemen; I was detained longer than I expected." He then walked slowly to his cabinet, inviting von Meysenbug and Biegeleben to follow him.

The ministerial cabinet was a large apartment, and like the ante-room it was lighted only by the lamp standing upon the large writing-table.

Count Mensdorff sank exhausted into an arm-chair near the table, and gave a sigh of relief when he had placed himself comfortably and supported his arms on the sides of the chair. He had first invited the two gentlemen, by a movement of the hand, to seat themselves near him at the writing-table.

The three men sat for a few moments in silence. The faces of the two privy councillors expressed great anxiety. Mensdorff gazed wearily before him.

"Well, gentlemen," he said at last, "it seems that your wishes will be fulfilled. His majesty the emperor will not draw back—he will by no means consent to the Prussian project for the reform of the confederacy; in a word, he has decided to go energetically onwards and to meet the great German question with decision—though the result should be a breach, and war;" the last word

he pronounced in a low tone, and with a half repressed sigh.

Meysenbug and Biegeleben exchanged looks of lively satisfaction, and awaited with great anxiety the further communications of Count Mensdorff.

"I left nothing untried," he proceeded, "to dissuade his majesty from this dangerous decision and unsafe policy. You know I do not pretend to understand politics well—I rely upon your superior knowledge; but I am a soldier, and though I have no right to consider myself a great general, I know perfectly what is needful for an efficient army. Well, gentlemen, the policy which we now pursue must lead to war—for Bismarck is not the man tamely to submit,—but for war an efficient army is needful, and this our opponents possess, and we have it not—utterly and entirely we have it not, according to my military convictions. What then will be our position?" He stopped, exhausted and sad.

"But your excellency must not look at the black side of things," said Herr von Meysenbug, "we have 800,000 men, according to the statements made by the War Department, and——"

"The War Department," interrupted Mensdorff energetically, "may state what it pleases. I am a practical soldier, and care little for the acts of the War Department; I know the condition of the army, and if the half of your 800,000 men can march I shall rejoice. And we shall be forced to operate in two theatres of war at once," he added; "for you must see that at the first cannon shot Italy will begin—I am convinced an alliance has already been formed with Prussia."

Herr von Biegeleben smiled with the air of an experienced picture dealer who hears a dilettante expressing an opinion, and he remarked in his measured tone,—

"May I remind your excellency that our ambassadors in Berlin and Florence assure us most positively that there is no question of an alliance between Prussia and Italy; yes, they even say that the slight difficulty which has arisen respecting the recognition of Italy by Prussia still increases. Certainly Italy would not, as the Duke de Gramont has told me to-day, seek so zealously the French mediation respecting the ceding of Venetia, if a Prussian alliance were concluded or likely to be so."

"Yes, yes," said Count Mensdorff thoughtfully, "the ambassadors maintain there is no alliance, I know that well, and yet I am certain of the contrary. I am also certain that the first threads of this treaty were spun in Paris—I feel quite sure of it—though it may not yet be a treaty placed in the archives."

"But," exclaimed Herr von Meysenbug, "the Duke de Gramont would surely not——"

"Gramont!" interrupted Count Mensdorff with still greater energy; "and do you really believe Gramont knows what is going on in Paris? Do you believe that the Emperor Napoleon has the last word of his labyrinthine policy written out in an official despatch and sent off to Gramont? Gramont knows what he is to say, and," he added, speaking more slowly and in a lower voice, "he is certainly not to say anything which might prevent war, for this war will be quite for the advantage of France. Paris has greatly feared lest the Prussian and Austrian arms should be united in Holstein; rather let Germany clash in a bloody struggle! Whichever side is defeated in this war, it is Germany which is defeated, and the conqueror wins for France!"

"Events look blacker and blacker to your excellency," said von Meysenbug with a slight smile. "I, on the other hand, hope that the victory of the Austrian arms

will again establish German unity beneath the banners of the empire,—and if Italy moves we shall soon make an end of that impious kingdom which threatens Church and State with annihilation !”

“ Would to God I could share your faith,” said Count Mensdorff, mournfully ; “ but I do not believe in the success of the Austrian arms, and if Benedek knows the army and its construction as well as I do, he will say the same. I have told the emperor all this,” he continued, in a still lower voice, “ and I implored him to take from me the office of prime minister, as it made me responsible for a policy which must lead to heavy catastrophe.”

“ But your excellency !” cried both the gentlemen in alarm.

“ No, no,” said Count Mensdorff, with a feeble smile, “ I am not going out. His majesty has commanded me to remain at my post, and as a soldier I obey—as a soldier,” he repeated with emphasis, “ for were I a political minister of the modern school, I should not remain. But so it is. Well, the order is given, and now we must march on. How must we act to hasten the decision, to bring on the quarrel ; for since we are to act, I am for acting at once ; every day will give our opponent fresh strength.”

“ The means are simple,” said Herr von Biegeleben, sitting very upright in his chair, and raising his hand as if imparting instruction ; “ the Holstein states must be urgently called upon to discuss the position of their country, and to decide upon the succession ; let us assemble them ; this will cross all the Prussian plans and oblige the gentlemen in Berlin to show their hands ; at the same time we shall gain a powerful support in the sympathy of the Grand Duchies, and the great German party.”

“ But our rule is only conjoint in the Grand Duchies,”

suggested Count Mensdorff; "by the Treaty of Gastein we only exercise the sovereign rights in common with Prussia."

"That is the precise point, permit me, your excellency," interrupted von Biegeleben, "which will bring on the conflict, and it will come under the favourable circumstances of being in a national cause."

"Well, it does not seem quite right," said Mensdorff, "and I care very little for the sympathy of the beer-shop orators in the Grand Duchies and in Germany and for all the singers and rhymers. I would rather we had an army like the Prussians; but be so good as to make me a small memorial on the subject with an instruction for Gablenz, and I will lay it before the emperor."

Herr von Biegeleben bowed, and a slight smile of satisfaction passed over Herr von Meysenbug's countenance.

"What is the aspect of Germany?" asked Mensdorff; "how do things progress in Saxony? Are they ready?"

"Perfectly," replied von Biegeleben. "Herr von Beust is very impatient, and has sent me a memorandum in which he points out the necessity for immediate action. Also he considers the assembling of the Holstein states as the best means for letting light into the situation. The disposition of the people in Saxony is excellent. Would your excellency like to read Count von Beust's note on the subject?"

He opened the portfolio which lay on the table.

Count Mensdorff waved his hand.

"How can Beust ever find time to write all that?" he said, with a slight smile and a sigh. "With regard to Hanover," he then continued, "have we any chance there?"

"A courier has just arrived with a despatch from

Count Ingelheim," replied Herr von Biegeleben, whilst he drew some papers from a case, and looked hastily through them; "he is satisfied. Count Platen has returned from Berlin, and assures him that all the efforts made to win him and Hanover to the side of Prussia have been unavailing. He has promised nothing, and he told Count Ingelheim to make known his inclinations in Vienna."

"Yes, I know him," said Count Mensdorff, slightly shrugging his shoulders. "And King George?" he asked.

"The king," replied Herr von Biegeleben, "will not hear of war; he always maintains that a good understanding between Austria and Prussia is the salvation of Germany; yet, if it comes to a rupture, the king must stand on our side."

"That does not seem to me certain," said Mensdorff. "King George, in my opinion, is a German and a Guelph, but he is not an Austrian. The traditions of the Seven Years' War still live in him."

"It is true," said von Meysenbug, who now took up the conversation, "that the King of Hanover is not devoted to Austria, and yet I believe he is safe, notwithstanding the powerful Prussian influence with which he is surrounded. We must endeavour to offer him something which will flatter his ideas; the king's hero is the Great Henry the Lion. Count Ingelheim knows through Doctor Klopp that he has been much engrossed with the history of his great and unfortunate ancestor."

"Doctor Klopp? Who is he?" asked Count Mensdorff, repressing a slight yawn.

"A schoolmaster formerly, who compromised himself in the year 1848 as a democrat and advocate of the rights of the people, but he is converted."

"To our church?" asked Mensdorff.

"Why—no," replied Herr von Meysenbug, with some hesitation; "but to our ideas and interests. He shows great talent in composing historical plays favourable to our side; he has obtained a certain celebrity, and is appointed editor of the 'Leibnitziana.' He sees a good deal of Count Platen, and is very useful to us."

"Well, well," said Count Mensdorff, smiling, "I suppose he is under your secret rule, dear Meysenbug?"

"I interest myself certainly in all rising authors," replied Herr von Meysenbug, calmly; "but Count Ingelheim especially protects them in Hanover."

"Well, and the bait for King George?" asked Mensdorff.

"My opinion is," said Herr von Meysenbug, "that a treaty should be made with Hanover guaranteeing them Prussian Westphalia and Holstein at the favourable termination of the war. We shall thus create a strong and irresistible position in the north, and Hanover thus strengthened can make no friendly alliance with Prussia, but will be entirely devoted to us in future."

"Dividing the bear's skin whilst he still wears it in the wood," said Count Mensdorff; "well, make a memorial on the subject; I will lay it before the emperor. I very much doubt whether for such a bait the King of Hanover will place his country in grave peril."

"We must give him the means of meeting the danger. The Kalik Brigade is up there; let us place it at his disposal, and Lieutenant Field Marshal Gablenz as its general."

"Our best soldier!" exclaimed Mensdorff; "yet the post is most important,—but if King George will accept nothing of all this?"

"Then events must take their course," said Meysen-

bug. "The vacillation of Count Platen in taking no decided step on either side will oblige Prussia to menace Hanover; this will arouse the pride of the king, and an important Prussian force will be occupied in the north, without," added Herr von Meysenbug with a smile, "our owing any duty to Hanover. They are taking immense trouble about Hanover in Berlin," he continued, "and they proposed, when Count Platen was in Berlin, a family union."

"So?" asked Count Mensdorff, attentively; "what then?"

Herr von Meysenbug took a letter from his portfolio, and handed it to the minister, pointing out the particular passage with his finger.

"Count Platen assured Ingelheim the affair should come to nothing," he said, rubbing his hands, whilst the minister read; "and in Berlin there is Stockhausen quite devoted to us, and determined to prevent any understanding being arrived at."

"Well, gentlemen," said Count Mensdorff, rising and returning von Meysenbug his paper, "you now know his majesty's intentions, so apply yourselves to the work. I shall see you when you visit the countess."

Both the gentlemen bowed, and left the cabinet.

Count Mensdorff sat for some time leaning back in his arm-chair. His features expressed gloomy thought, and his eyes saw nothing that was around him, but gazed into space.

He raised his head slowly, and looked round the large dimly-lighted room.

"Oh! ye great men who have watched in this spot over Austria's greatness, would that ye were in my place! My hand is ready to draw the sword for my country, but it is unable to guide the vessel of state

through this dangerous sea so full of sunken rocks. I see the abyss on the brink of which Austria, my beloved Austria, stands. I cannot restrain her,—I cannot even resign the place which burdens me with the whole responsibility. I must tarry at my post since I am a soldier, and yet I cannot serve as a soldier.”

Again he sank into deep thought.

A low knock was heard at the inner door of the cabinet, and almost immediately two boys entered, of the ages of five and eight; they advanced shyly and cautiously at first, but when they saw the count was alone, they ran up to him, and climbed on to his chair.

Count Mensdorff awoke from his reverie; his face cleared, and he smiled as he put his arms around the two boys.

“We have not seen you before to-day, papa,” said the youngest, “and we waited to say good night. Good night, dear papa, we were to go to bed directly, and we are very tired.”

Count Mensdorff gently stroked their hair as he drew the two children nearer to him, and pressed a kiss on their pure white brows.

“Good night, my children,” he said, affectionately; “thank you for staying up to see me. I hope you have been industrious and good all day.”

“Of course we have, papa,” cried both the children with proud certainty, “or they would not have let us stay up to see you!”

The minister’s eyes, before so sad, shone with affection; no one could have imagined that this man, with his mild face and smiling look,—his two children in his arms,—that this was the man who was to guide a great empire through its most dangerous crisis, and to encounter Germany’s mightiest and bloodiest catastrophe.

"Sleep well, my children," said Count Mensdorff. "God bless you!" He kissed them once more, and made the sign of the cross over their heads.

He looked happy until they left the room, then his eyes grew sad again. "They are happy," he whispered; "care has not yet robbed them of sleep."

He rose and rang a bell.

The attendant entered.

"Does the countess entertain a large party?"

"It is a small reception day, but the guests are very numerous."

Count Mensdorff sighed, glanced for a moment at the mirror, and then left his cabinet, to repair to his wife's drawing-room.

There the crowd had become even larger, and the greatest animation prevailed. The politicians had extracted all the news, or convinced themselves there was none to hear, and the whole company was passing the time in light conversation in various groups, until the minister's return; the younger gentlemen fluttered round the young ladies, and Lieutenant von Stielow was seen in animated conversation with a young beauty of most pleasing and distinguished appearance.

This young lady, the only daughter of the widowed Countess Frankenstein, was the same who had so occupied him in the theatre when he had been observed by Baron von Reischach, and now the young officer seemed extremely absorbed in the apparently light drawing-room conversation, for he looked down on the young lady with great interest, and she leant on the arm of her chair and raised her large brown eyes to his face, whilst her hand played with her white feather fan, which matched her dress in simplicity; it was entirely white, and only ornamented with small bouquets of violets.

"Then it is arranged, countess," said Herr von Stielow, "if you go into Switzerland with your mother you accept me as your travelling companion. I know all the most beautiful parts, and I will make you an excellent guide."

"I have not the selection of our travelling companions, Herr von Stielow," replied the young lady; "but I am sure it will be agreeable to my mother if we meet you in Switzerland, and if you are kind enough to show us some of its beauties."

"That is an excessively courteous reply, fair lady," said the lieutenant, with some displeasure, "but to me it is rather too courteous. I am quite sure that the countess will welcome me if she meets me, and that she will not refuse her consent to my joining your tour among the mountains, but——"

"Well," said the young lady, with a saucy little laugh, "then our travelling plans are made, and everything is arranged; or did you wish for an uncourteous answer? You could hardly expect one from me."

"You are unkind, countess," replied von Stielow, biting his lips in the vain endeavour to gnaw his short moustache; "you know well I am not making idle conversation, but that I ask an important question. I do not at all wish to be intrusive, and to owe it to your mother's politeness that I am not sent away. You see," he added, more warmly, and with less constraint, "I expect such pleasure from our trip,—I love the free pure mountain air,—and I am sure that you, too, will find immense enjoyment in the lovely valleys and high peaks; you will appreciate their beauty, you must be happier there than here, 'in the breath of the tomb,' as the poet says."

The young lady listened to him with her upturned eyes

glowing brighter and warmer, but she suddenly cast them down, and said in a mocking tone, which was, however, softened by the smile on her lips, "And how do you know that I am not quite in my element in the tomb-like breath of the town?"

"I know it, Countess Clara," said the young officer, with animation; "and because I know it I wish to guide you to the great poem of glorious nature, and to read it with you,—but only if you honestly wish it, and will be really glad to have me with you."

"We make plans for the summer, and the whole world speaks of war. Who knows," she added, as her brows clouded, "whether all our plans will not be thrown to the winds, or consumed in the flames?"

"Good heavens!" cried Herr von Stielow, "if war breaks out of course all will be changed; but that need not prevent our making plans in case all should keep quiet. So——"

"Here comes Count Mensdorff," said the young lady, rising. "Perhaps we shall now hear something. Mamma signs to me; forgive me for leaving you, Herr von Stielow; we shall see you in a day or two; you will tell me then if we are to have peace or war, and if our imaginary trip has any chance."

"Then you will take me?" he asked, earnestly; "but I want no courteous reply, give me a kind and honest answer."

She looked firmly at him for a moment, and then said, as a slight blush heightened the tender colour in her cheeks, "Yes—if you will find us piquant enough, and if you can forget Vienna."

And with a light elastic step she glided over the parquet, and joined her mother and a circle of ladies on the other side of the room.

Herr von Stielow looked after her for a moment with emotion, and then joined various other groups.

Count Mensdorff, on entering the room, first joined the circle immediately around the countess, and remained in conversation there some little time.

The diplomatists all grew uneasy, and broke off with more or less politeness the indifferent conversations in which they were engaged.

At last the minister entered the second drawing-room alone. The Duke de Gramont immediately approached him with easy grace, and was warmly welcomed.

The two personages became the centre of general observation, but no one ventured near to disturb their earnest conversation, which lasted about ten minutes.

When Count Mensdorff turned away from the duke he found himself just opposite Herr von Werther.

He spoke to him with perfect politeness, and immediately all the anxious side glances were employed in watching their interview.

It lasted only two minutes.

Count Mensdorff turned from the Prussian ambassador with a low bow, and walked hastily through the room to General von Knesebeck, took his arm, led him aside, and commenced a most cordial and animated conversation.

The Duke de Gramont had again joined the other guests. Von Meysenbug and von Biegeleben had appeared, and were surrounded by diplomatists of the second rank.

In about a quarter of an hour Baron Werther was surrounded by an icy atmosphere; every attempt he made at conversation fell to the ground, after the few phrases which politeness demanded; and it required all his talent to conceal his isolation, until the happy moment came which permitted him to retreat.

At last the time of departure arrived, and the salons of the palace grew empty.

Lieutenant von Stielow went down the broad steps and found his cab in the appointed place.

He gave the coachman an address, got in, and wrapped himself in his white cloak.

"What did she mean about forgetting Vienna,—can she know? Well, all Vienna knows it; I make no secret of my life. If *she* wished it, I would cast aside every folly, but does she wish it?"

He grew very thoughtful.

"She will wish it," he cried, "and then my life shall follow its true star,—away with every erring meteor; but how charming they are!" he whispered to himself.

The carriage stopped before a large house in the Ringe.

Herr von Stielow dismissed the coachman, nodded to the porter as if he knew him well, and ascended a couple of steps. A pretty lady's-maid opened the glass door of the entrance hall.

The young officer threw off his mantle, and entered a room elegantly furnished with dark blue satin; before the fire-place stood a tea-table lighted by a large Carcel lamp.

Upon a *chaise longue*, on one side of the fire-place, reposed the slender form of a young and beautiful woman clothed in white.

Her pale features of the noblest Grecian type were partly illumined by the lamp, partly by the red glow of the fire, and her eyes, of deeper black than even the smooth ebon tresses of her hair, now shone in soft, sweet reverie, now sparkled with quick, brilliant rays.

Her slender white arms half concealed by her large open sleeves, lay in her lap, and her slight fingers played with the clasp of her girdle.

Her whole appearance was of wonderful beauty, with a demoniacal look heightened by the changing lights which played over her face and the whole of her figure.

As the young man entered, she sprang up, and her eyes flashed ; it were hard to say whether with love, pride, or triumph.

Such must have been Cleopatra, when Antony approached her.

She flew to meet him, and threw her arms around him, whilst her glowing looks were fixed upon his eyes.

" At last you come, sweet friend !" she whispered ;
" I have waited long !"

When the young man entered the room there had been a certain coldness on his face, and now there was more politeness than tenderness in the movement with which he placed his arm around her shoulder.

Did she feel this ?

Her eyes dilated and became more glowing, her arms were pressed closer round his neck, and through her slender form passed a slight shiver.

A magnetic stream seemed to pass from her to her lover. He led her gently to her seat, knelt down before her, and kissed her left hand as it hung by her side, whilst with the right she stroked the hair upon his brow.

The star was veiled with clouds, the baleful meteor glowed in vivid brightness.





CHAPTER IV.

NAPOLEON.

THE crowd flowing along the Quai Voltaire in Paris, on the shores of the Seine, changed its varied pictures so quickly that it resembled a kaleidoscope.

One bright morning about ten o'clock, a man was to be seen pursuing his way with hasty steps from the Rue Bonaparte across the bridge towards the Tuileries.

Although he was scarcely of the middle height, and rather shabby in dress, yet he caused many passengers to look at him for a moment—certainly only for a moment, but a Parisian seldom looks at anything much longer—from the unusual swiftness of his step, and the thoughtfulness with which he hastened on without looking to right or left, pursuing his way in a manner which proved him to be usually a dweller in large capitals.

The man thus hurrying to the royal and imperial palace was even meanly clad; from his dress, and his bent form, he might have been supposed a master in some elementary school, or a lawyer's clerk; but the changing expression of his sharply-cut features, his red and white northern complexion, and the penetrating

glances of his light grey eyes, gave to his appearance a character which belied the impression first formed.

The man gained the other side of the Seine and entered the courtyard leading to the portal of the Tuileries.

He showed the sentry a paper, and on glancing at it the *voltigeur de la garde* stepped back, and with a short "*Bien, Monsieur,*" admitted him into that inner court of the imperial residence, where no profane foot was permitted to enter, and into which only the court equipages and the carriages of the *grande*s of the empire were allowed to drive.

Without slackening his pace the little man hastened on. He passed by the great imperial entrance—before which, under a wide canopy, supported by golden lances, stood a group of officers of the household, and *laquais de palais*, conversing in whispers—to a smaller one, where he entered with the assurance of one who well knows the locality. He went up a step and into an ante-room, where in a large arm-chair sat a *huissier de palais*, performing his duty with quiet dignity.

"M. Piétri?" said the visitor.

"M. Piétri is in his cabinet," replied the *huissier*, half raising himself from his chair.

"Ask if he will receive M. Hansen, he has an appointment with me."

The *huissier* rose at once and entered the cabinet of the emperor's private secretary; after a moment he opened the door, saying, in a low tone, "Enter, sir!"

The former Danish advocate, that unwearied agitator on behalf of the rights of Denmark, entered the cabinet of Napoleon III.'s private secretary.

This cabinet was a large, light room, full of tables and repositories for papers, deeds, and maps. At the

farther end was a spiral staircase which led into the apartment above, the entrance to which was closed by the silken folds of a dark *portière*.

Piétrî sat before a large writing-table. He was still a young man, and slightly made. His rather long face had a bright, peaceful, spiritual expression, which gave a charm to any ordinary employment undertaken by him.

He bowed as Hansen entered, pushed back a packet of letters with which he was occupied, and politely pointed to an arm-chair which stood at a little distance from the writing-table.

"Well," said Piétrî, commencing the conversation, as he fixed his bright eyes in expectation upon his visitor, "you have come from Germany, what have you seen and heard? Are matters ripe? In what mind are the people? Tell me everything—we must know every detail of what is occurring there, in order to take up our own position."

"Let me begin with the central point of the position," replied Hansen. "I was lately in Berlin, and I discovered nothing there, with regard to the views of statesmen or the national feeling, to make me doubt the correctness of my impressions."

At this moment a noise was heard at the top of the stairs at the further end of the cabinet, the heavy folds of the *portière* slowly opened, and a man appeared standing on the top step.

It was Napoleon III. who thus descended into his private secretary's cabinet.

Piétrî rose as soon as he heard the *portière* withdrawn and the foot on the stairs, and remained standing before the writing-table.

Hansen followed his example.

The emperor slowly descended the steps. It was

not the form represented in the life-size portrait; the hand placed commandingly upon the crown and sceptre of France, proudly draped in the imperial mantle, which well became the graceful, slender figure.

It was an old man who descended the stairs; *embon-point* had destroyed the elegance of his figure, illness and pain made his carriage feeble and uncertain, his grey hair no longer thickly surrounded his brow, but fell in thin locks over his temples, and his eyes, in former times often veiled though capable of stormy flashes, now looked dull and wearied.

The emperor, dressed in a plain black morning coat, and smoking a cigarette, the strong and excellent aroma of which preceded him in a light blue cloud, carefully descended the stairs, and entered the cabinet.

He walked slowly, with the heaviness of later years.

He stopped before his secretary, gave him a peculiar look from the veiled shadows of his eyes, and bowed low to Hansen. He seemed to scan him completely in a quick momentary examination, and he then turned his head to Piétri, with a slight expression of inquiry.

"Sire," said Piétri, "Monsieur Hansen, a Dane who is completely devoted to his country, and who has also done us good service, for as a Dane he loves France; he has travelled through Germany, seen many personages, and was about to tell me the result of his observations."

The emperor again bowed to Hansen; the amiable and charming kindness with which he could at will exercise a magic influence, shed a glow like sunshine over the weary indifference of his face.

"I know," he said, in his low but clear and penetrating voice, which expressed in a masterly way the finest shades of feeling, "I know that all Danes love their country, and for that reason they have warm hearts for

France, their country's friend. Your name is known to me, sir, as that of a man distinguished for his burning and active patriotism, even in so patriotic a country as Denmark."

Hansen bowed low, whilst the pleasurable emotion he felt at the emperor's words caused him to blush.

"Sire," he said, "so gracious a recognition from your majesty's lips almost makes me forget that my zealous efforts in my country's behalf have been fruitless. If my humble name is known to your majesty, you must know, too, how much I love France and revere her emperor, upon whose mighty will it depends whether Denmark shall win back and maintain her rightful position amongst the nations of Europe."

The emperor bowed his head slightly. A sudden deeply penetrating glance shot from his half closed eyes towards the Danish agitator, whose upturned face expressed only deep veneration.

"My dear Piétri," said Napoleon III., turning to his secretary, "I came down to look through the morning's correspondence. Is it ready for me?"

"Here it is, sire," said Piétri, taking some papers from the table and handing them to the emperor.

Napoleon took them, and with a movement recalling his youthful agility, he rolled a chair close to the window, seated himself, and took from his *étau* another cigarette, which he lighted at the end of the one he had just smoked.

"I will not disturb your conversation," he said with an engaging smile. "Go on as if no one were here, I will quietly read my letters."

Piétri again seated himself before the writing-table, and signed to Hansen to do the same.

The emperor looked at the first of the papers he held

in his hand very attentively ; it was marked with a blue pencil at the most important passages.

"So you were lately in Berlin?" asked Piétri, again looking at Hansen expectantly.

"I was there," he replied, "and I brought away with me the conviction that a great German conflict is unavoidable."

"Do they desire it?"

"They do not desire the conflict ; but they desire what cannot be obtained without a conflict."

"And that is——?"

"The perfect reform of the German Confederation, the military ascendancy of Prussia to the Main ; the complete setting aside of the traditions of Metternich's Germany. Count Bismarck is recklessly determined to reach his aim, and I believe he, too is convinced that this aim cannot be reached without war."

Piétri was silent for a few moments, and his eyes glanced at the emperor still immersed in his papers, then he looked full at Hansen and said :

"And would they not be pacified by the sole possession of Holstein and Schleswig? Provided Austria cedes her conjoint authority in the Duchies, I thought they intended to settle the boundaries of Silesia to your advantage."

A slight glow passed over Hansen's face, but he replied with unmoved voice :—

"No, the conflict cannot thus be avoided. I believe they were inclined to make great concessions in exchange for the entire possession of the Duchies ; and if France heartily demanded it, Danish North Schleswig might be restored ; but no palliative will prevent the conflict.

"Believe me, sir!" he continued, with animation, "this conflict is no quarrel about the German Grand Duchies ;

they know well enough in Berlin that they must in time fall to Prussia, and they do not fear the resolutions of the Grand Duke of Augustenburg. The strife arises from the historical development of Prussia and Germany. Prussia is really not the second German state, but the first, and the German Confederation grants her only the second place, and represses her natural powers of development by a machinery the springs of which are set in motion in Vienna.

“This is the true cause of the quarrel: Prussia desires the place which naturally belongs to her, and which Austria held formerly. The quarrel has lasted years and years, and would perhaps have continued many years longer in its latent form—for the exercise of the wits of European diplomatists—if Bismarck had not been at the head of the marvellously expansive Prussian state. This statesman is an incarnation of the Prussian spirit, strengthened by an extraordinary and genial originality. He knows how to develop in the highest degree the rich and well-knit strength of the country, and he has determined to put an end to Prussia’s present position. He can be led to no second Olmütz; he will gain for Prussia her place in Germany, or perish.”

The emperor’s hand with the papers it held slowly sank into his lap, and his eyes, suddenly opened widely, and burning with excitement, were fixed on Hansen’s face. His master’s attention did not escape Piétri; he said, with a slight smile:—

“It is indeed wonderful to hear a Dane speak so enthusiastically of the Prussian minister, here in Paris.”

“Why not?” asked Hansen, quietly. “This man who knows what he wants, and exerts all his powers to gain what he wills, who loves his country and determines to increase its greatness and power, compels my respect,

—he deserves esteem for his efforts—admiration if he succeeds. Between Bismarck and myself stands my country, Denmark. The German part of the Duchies we do not desire and could not make use of,—but we want what is Danish, and what is necessary to protect the Danish frontier. If this is yielded we shall have no cause to be the foe of Prussia or Germany. If this is withheld Prussia may for ever reckon little Denmark amongst her enemies, for exactly the same reasons which influence Herr von Bismarck's policy."

Napoleon III. listened attentively.

Piétri said:—

"Have you gained the impression that there is an inclination on the part of Prussia to meet the wishes of Denmark?"

"I do not think this impossible," replied Hansen, firmly, "especially," he continued with great distinctness, "if Prussia, in her difficult position, might by such an arrangement, gain the support of one of the great powers. It would then only be necessary to arrange the frontier line, so as to maintain the interests of both Denmark and Germany."

As he slowly uttered these words he looked at the emperor. Napoleon had raised the letter in his hand near to his eyes, which were fixed without any especial expression upon the paper.

Piétri enquired further:—

"Supposing that Bismarck desires war, or more properly, desires objects only to be obtained by war, will the king proceed to extremities, rather than dismiss his minister? I speak to you without reserve," he added, apparently with reckless candour; "you live in the political world, and know as well as I do what is said in the circles surrounding the Prussian ambassador."

Did you receive the impression in Berlin that Count Goltz might possibly succeed Bismarck?"

"No," replied Hansen, decidedly. "The King of Prussia shrinks excessively from war,—that is to say, not from war itself, but from a war with Austria—a German war. The king dreads such a war and earnestly wishes to avoid it. If Vienna would meet him in the principal points, he would probably make many more concessions than Bismarck would approve. But when once the question is asked the king will not yield the principle. He has created a new army organization. According to all judges it is exemplary, and he carried it out in spite of the opposition of parliament; he will not draw back when the first opportunity comes of vindicating and enlarging Prussia's powerful position in Germany. The king will strike with a heavy heart, but he will strike, and after the first cannon has fired he will be only a general. I have not conversed with King William myself," continued Hansen, "but what I have said is the *résumé* of conversations I have had with those who know intimately both the situation and the personages concerned. As to Herr von Bismarck's position," he continued, "it is perfectly firm. Bismarck will never forfeit the king's confidence."

"Why not?" asked Piétri, with animation.

"Because he is a soldier."

"That is to say, he wears the Landwehr uniform."

"That is only the exterior, but in this case it is not an idle appearance. Bismarck is a soldier: he is a man of action, of quick and clear decision; his diplomatic pen does not tremble at the roar of cannon or the clash of arms; he would be as calm riding over a battle-field as sitting by a green table. The king feels this; he is himself a soldier, and he trusts him. I know Count Goltz

has many friends, but these friends deceive themselves, and I can assure them, that if they have chosen him in Paris, they have not in Berlin."

There was a short silence.

After Piétri had glanced at the emperor, he further enquired:—

"But what is the national feeling? Judging from the press, war is not popular?"

"Indeed it is not," replied Hansen; "the people dread a defeat, and the parliamentary opposition believe in their short-sightedness that Bismarck is commencing a war to get himself out of the blind alley into which they think they have forced him. They little know the man with whom they have to do!"

"But," objected Piétri, "will not the Prussian government place itself in a very dangerous position if it begins a war against Austria and Germany, whilst its own subjects oppose this war and regard it unfavourably?"

"I think this danger is apparent, but not real," replied Hansen. "The army—and this is the main point—will do its duty, and in spite of all opposition will be ready in full strength; and all who speak and write against Bismarck now, will fall at his feet after the first victory. Interior strife will be extinguished when the first battle is won: each addition to Prussia, each step towards the unity of Germany, will tend to make the war which procured them more popular."

"Victory!" exclaimed Piétri; "but will Prussia be victorious?"

"It must be so," said Hansen, calmly. "Austria deceives herself both as to the forces she can, with the help of Germany, place in the field, and those at the command of Prussia. The strength of the Prussian army is immense; it is quickly concentrated and homogeneous.

The Austrian army is weak, and cannot be properly bound together, or placed under a united command. The South German soldiers with whom I have spoken, and who know the condition of Austria, have no doubt of the success of Prussia. The conduct of the war on the South German side must be a very lame affair, for they have not yet even begun their military preparations. Hanover and Hesse desire to remain neutral, but they have concluded no treaty, and after all their hesitation they will be surprised. Austria will find her only energetic support in Saxony, where Beust, the life and soul of the anti-Prussian movement, has succeeded in getting the army ready to take the field."

"You believe entirely in victory for Prussia?" asked Piétri, in a tone that showed he was not inclined to share the belief without demur.

"I do," replied Hansen, "and I think all prudent policy must reckon on it almost as a certainty."

"You spoke just now," said Piétri, after a short pause, "of additions to Prussia. What do you think she will demand, or take, if victory is on her side?"

"All that she needs, and can keep."

"That is, expressed in names and numbers?"

"The whole of North Germany unconditionally."

Piétri made a movement of incredulity.

"Be assured I am not deceived," said Hansen; "the people themselves will desire conquests when Prussian blood has once flowed: what is to be gained from Prussia must be gained before the war; after one victory they will not listen to argument in Berlin."

The emperor stood up.

Piétri and Hansen also rose.

Napoleon placed the packet of papers which his secretary had given him again on the table.

He bowed his head slightly to Hansen, and said—

“I am very glad, sir, to have made your acquaintance, and I shall always be happy to be useful to a nation whose every member is so inspired with patriotism.”

Hansen bowed low, and left the room.

As the door closed behind him the emperor rose quickly, his eyes shone, and he said, as he stepped hastily towards Piétri:—

“Piétri, do you believe that man observes sharply, and is well informed?”

“I know him to be a sharp observer. As to his information, I know that Bismarck has received him; that he has had intercourse with various political personages in Germany, and that he has a talent for discovering the direction of popular opinion. Nevertheless I think he over-estimates the power of Prussia. Bismarck impressed him greatly, and the impression made is mirrored in his report. We have seen the same before; this Prussian minister well knows how to gain those whom he wishes to win.”

The emperor gazed thoughtfully before him. “I fear,” he said, in a low voice, “that the man is right, and that we have a great and difficult historical problem before us. Can we support Austria without wounding Italy, already too strong to be ignored? Can Prussia prevail, and Germany be reconstituted, without danger to the prestige of France—yes, even to our frontier! Alsace and Lorraine once were German.”

Piétri smiled.

“Your majesty loves to jest!”

“Ah! Piétri,” said the emperor, placing his hand on his secretary’s shoulder, partly to impress his words, partly as if seeking a support, “you do not know the Germans; I know and understand them, for I have lived

amongst them. The German nation is a lion, which knows not his own power; a child might lead him with a chain of flowers,—yet in his claws there is strength to destroy the whole European world, when he knows his own nature and when he once tastes blood. And in this war he will taste blood—the old jest, '*l'appétit vient en mangeant*' will turn to frightful earnest; let this Prussian lion once break his chain, and he will be a frightfully dangerous neighbour."

The emperor said this half aloud in short broken sentences, while his eyes, as if following a vision, stared into space.

A quiet smile played round Piétri's lips.

"Your majesty has a dark hour," said he, in the calm encouraging tone used to one ill and excited; "I believe the strongest element in the German lion is sleep—should he awake and play the dangerous pranks your majesty describes, he will find on our frontier our large armies and the imperial eagle. The impertinent lion will soon be taught his place."

The emperor let his head sink down on the arm still resting on Piétri's shoulder; his whole figure seemed to collapse, his eyes glowed wildly beneath their veil of eyelashes, his breath came with difficulty through his parted lips, as if it struggled to form words which might express his gloomy thoughts. The mighty emperor seemed oppressed by the darkest forebodings; at last, without the least movement in his lips, he said, in a low tone which filled the quiet room with a trembling shudder,

"I am not the Great Napoleon!"

The voice was so sad, so chilling, so deeply melancholy that Piétri's face, before calm and smiling, turned pale as if touched by deadly cold.

He sought for a reply; but a noise was heard, the *portière* was withdrawn, and on the upper step of the staircase appeared the emperor's groom of the chambers, who announced:

"M. Drouyn de Lhuys requests an audience."

At the first sound the emperor had withdrawn his arm from Piétri's shoulder, and his countenance had regained its usual calm, cold expression. He received the announcement with his ordinary manner, and replied:

"I will come."

The groom of the chambers withdrew.

"I know what he wants," said Napoleon, "he wishes me to put a spoke in the rolling wheel, to prevent hostilities. I often wish to do so—but is it possible? Shall I risk at this moment the great question? for if I speak and my word is not obeyed, the firebrand is kindled which will endanger the existence of France and of myself. If I permit things to go on, time at any rate is gained, and time brings favourable chances, and the possibility of strengthening the power and influence of France without a war. Well, let us hear what he wishes."

And he walked slowly towards the stairs. At the first step he paused, and returned several paces into the cabinet.

"Piétri," said he in a low tone, "what do you think of Drouyn de Lhuys?"

"Sire," he replied, "I admire his deep and extended information, and I have a great respect for his character."

The emperor was silent for a moment.

"He is very near the House of Orleans," he said with some hesitation.

"Sire," replied Piétri firmly, "he has given your majesty his oath, and I know M. Drouyn de Lhuys too well to doubt that his oath is sacred."

The emperor was again silent for a moment, then he made a slight sign of adieu to Piétri with his hand, and mounted the stairs to the apartment above.

Piétri returned to his writing-table, and looked through the remainder of the correspondence.

Napoleon III. entered his plainly furnished cabinet, walked up to the writing-table and touched a bell. The groom of the chambers appeared.

"M. Drouyn de Lhuys!" said the emperor.

A few moments afterwards the Minister for Foreign Affairs entered his sovereign's cabinet.

Drouyn de Lhuys at this time was about sixty years of age, tall and strongly made. His thin grey hair and equally grey whiskers, arranged in the English fashion, surrounded a healthy looking, fresh-coloured face, lighted up by an expression of kindliness and affability.

The appearance of this well-known man resembled a well-to-do English landlord, rather than an experienced statesman who had thrice already, under circumstances of great difficulty, filled the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The eyes alone, sharp, clear, and observing, beneath the broad brow, gave an idea of the talent of this strong, excellent, and distinguished man, accustomed to unravel and knit together the tangled threads of European policy.

The minister wore a black morning coat, with the large rosette of the Legion of Honour in the button-hole.

The emperor advanced to meet him and held out his hand.

"I am delighted to see you, my dear minister," he said, with an engaging smile, "what have you to tell me? how does Europe get on?"

"Sire," replied Drouyn de Lhuys with his peculiarly

slow, and pedantic-sounding sharpness of pronunciation, "Europe is sick, and will soon have a dangerous paroxysm if your Majesty does not employ soothing measures."

"Do you not over-estimate my power," said the emperor, smiling, "by thinking that I can? But," he added seriously, "speaking without metaphor, you wish to tell me that hostilities in Germany are about to break out—is it not so?" and sinking into an easy chair, he signed to his minister also to seat himself.

"It is true, sire," said Drouyn de Lhuys, as he seated himself, opened his portfolio and drew from it some papers, "that this is what I wished to say to your Majesty. Here is a despatch from Vienna stating, that—in incredible blindness—they have determined to commence hostilities and to urge matters to an immediate rupture. They are about to summon the States in the duchies without the consent of Prussia, and Count Mensdorff has forwarded a despatch to Berlin, which is really an ultimatum, as it requires in a high tone the immediate suspension of all military preparations."

The minister handed the emperor the despatch; he looked through it hastily, and placed it on the table.

"Here," added Drouyn de Lhuys, "is a despatch from Benedetti, stating most positively that Herr von Bismarck is determined to take the most decided measures to obtain for Prussia her proper position in Germany. The project of reform which he brought before the assembly of the German Confederacy in Frankfort, was a moral declaration of war against the preponderance of Austria, and the position bestowed on her by the treaty of Vienna. Count Mensdorff's despatch, which I have had the honour of naming to your Majesty, has already arrived in Berlin, and been presented by

Count Karolyi. It has given great offence. Benedetti describes it as one of those compositions which in former times the German Emperor addressed to the Margrave of Brandenburg, and it has served greatly to diminish the King of Prussia's repugnance to war. Thus on both sides matters are hastening towards war, and, in a few weeks perhaps, the armies will be opposed to each other, and the whole of Europe will take part in the quarrel, if your Majesty does not command a halt."

The minister stopped, and looked at the emperor inquiringly. Napoleon leant dreamily on the arm of his chair.

"And what do you advise me to do, my dear minister?" he asked after a short pause, as he raised himself a little and looked anxiously at Drouyn de Lhuys' calm and open countenance.

"Your Majesty knows my opinion on this subject," he replied, "though I fear you do not share it. A German war must be prevented for the sake of France, for the sake of the peace of Europe. I think I do not deceive myself," he continued, "when I express my conviction that Prussia will emerge from such a war more powerful and more to be dreaded, for I cannot believe in the military success of weak and decaying Austria; and as to the remainder of Germany, it is not worth speaking of, with its isolated little armies without military or political connexion. To permit Prussia to become more powerful—to become the supreme leader in Germany—is completely against the interest of France. Your Majesty must allow me to say that the France of to-day—the France of Napoleon," he added, slightly bowing,—“should, according to my views, pursue the same course of policy towards Prussia and the House of Hohenzollern as Bourbon France formerly pursued to-

wards Austria and the House of Hapsburg. Then Austria's endeavour was the union of the military and political strength of the German nation, and France, wherever she turned, found herself opposed by the House of Hapsburg. Prussia now holds the same place, and continually thwarts our lawful ambition, and if in this war she succeeds in uniting in her own hands the military power of Germany, our plans will all be crossed, and the influence which we justly exercise on the affairs of Europe greatly diminished."

"But if Prussia is beaten?" asked the emperor.

"I do not believe in such a result," replied Drouyn de Lhuys, "but grant it is so, what do we gain? Austria, with unbounded power, would place herself at the head of Germany, and the old enmity of the House of Hapsburg, strengthened by the Italian war, would be exercised with new energy to our disadvantage. There is but one policy for France, that is, to uphold the present position in Germany—to nourish, to sharpen the antagonism between Prussia and Austria, but never let it come to a war, to a decision; and to make use of the fear felt for both these powerful rivals in the smaller courts of Germany to extend our own influence. Thus, in an imperceptible way, we shall easily obtain what the Emperor Napoleon I. obtained from the confederacy of the Rhine—the power of using federal Germany against the two great states. I cannot believe there is any other policy for France to pursue with regard to Germany. Prussian or even Austrian Germany must always be our foe, and a very dangerous foe: let us oppose the two great powers, and drive in between them the wedge of the German kingdoms and dukedoms jealous of their sovereignty; then, if we act prudently and carefully, and require nothing to hurt the national

feeling, Germany will be completely subservient to our will."

"You think then—?" said the emperor inquiringly.

"That your Majesty must prevent the outbreak of war in Germany with all your energy, or the position of France in Europe will be much imperilled."

The emperor was silent for a time, and tapped with his fingers upon the arm of his chair, then he said:

"Do you believe that I can prevent war; do you believe I am strong enough to force back the half-drawn sword into the scabbard? Yes, if Palmerston still lived," he said, thoughtfully; "with him it would have been possible; but with the England of to-day, who has great words, but deeds no longer!—Do you believe my single voice will be heard? And if I am not heard? Must I not fear that, as in the story of Jason, the two foes about to fall on each other will quickly unite against him who would have thrust himself between them? Bismarck would soon see such a game. Oh! I have let this man become too great!"

Drouyn de Lhuys calmly replied—

"I do not share the fears and difficulties your Majesty has so graciously pointed out. A single word from you would prevent the war. I must impart to your Majesty a conversation I had with Bismarck, the last time I saw him. He explained to me with the greatest openness and freedom from all reserve, the position he desired Prussia should hold in Germany. A war with Austria he declared was an absolute necessity for the historical development of Germany, since Austria would never freely allow Prussia to take the place due to her. 'But though this war is necessary,' said the Prussian minister, 'and though I, and every Prussian government, must regard it as a certain logical event, yet the exact moment in which it

must commence depends upon the will and statesmanship of the government. I should certainly not be so foolish as to undertake two great wars at once, and to strike France and Austria at the same time. If you are in earnest in desiring the delay of the outbreak required by the chronic German question, say so plainly and openly. I can wait.' So said Herr von Bismarck. I implore your Majesty," continued Drouyn de Lhuys, "to authorise me to make the declaration he thus invited, and to say plainly that France will not permit a German war, and that in case hostilities commence, her armies will at once start for the frontier."

The minister looked anxiously into the emperor's face. He still gazed thoughtfully before him.

After a few moments Napoleon spoke :

"I cannot entirely share your views, my dear minister. Like yourself I see the danger that may accrue to France from a German war; I also acknowledge the truth of your opinion that the relations of the old confederacy enabled us to exert considerable influence in Germany in a comfortable and easy manner. "But," he added thoughtfully, "could such relations continue? A movement is passing through the world, urging national union, and I think it highly dangerous to endeavour to oppose the spirit of the times. I know you are dissatisfied with what I have done in Italy, with what I must perhaps still do; and yet I think I am right. The pulses in the life of the people now beat so strongly, that the balance of the world can no longer be maintained by those little weights which old politicians threw now into one, now into the other scale. National agglomerations must take place, and we must endeavour to place such a weight in the balance as shall prevent its kicking the beam. Besides, Germany will not be so dangerous as you fear. The

German races have no craving for foreign conquest ; they are not offensive, and only struggle for a federal formation. I regard, too, the result of the war differently. I do not think that either of the two opponents will be completely and absolutely victorious ; they will weaken each other : we will, to a certain extent, harass the victor, and I believe in the end Germany will be divided into three parts : Prussia with North Germany, Austria, and South Germany. Then," he continued with a smile, "you will have an excellent opportunity, my dear minister, of proving your favourite proverb—*Divide et impera*, and your work will be less in detail than heretofore."

"Then your majesty will not forbid the German war?" asked Drouyn de Lhuys.

"I believe I neither can, nor ought," replied the emperor ; "Italy too, presses me to fulfil my promise. Free to the Adriatic !"

"A promise your majesty ought never to have given," said the minister, firmly.

"Perhaps," said Napoleon ; "but it is given, and I cannot leave every question open. Mexico weighs heavily upon me."

Napoleon sighed deeply. After a pause he added :—

"I will make an effort to reconcile your views with my own. Let us ask in Vienna if they are willing to yield me Venice to restore to Italy. It would form the basis of a possible alliance with Austria, which would enable us to interfere with real power and a prospect of success in the complicated German question. Then, even if the negotiation were successful, it would leave us free."

"I do not believe the measure would be successful," said Drouyn de Lhuys ; "the House of Hapsburg prizes Venice highly, although it has always been a burden and a drawback ; but I do wish to obtain this apple of

discord, for without it an alliance may one day be formed against us between Austria and Italy. I doubt, too, whether a free choice will hereafter be left to us. The rôles are distributed before a performance is begun, and those who dally may be set aside. Nevertheless, I can say nothing against the principle of the step your Majesty proposes, and if you wish it, it shall be carried out immediately."

The emperor seized a letter which lay on his writing-table, and said, as he looked through it hastily, "I am urgently requested by Saxony to grant no support to the Prussian claims. I cannot give any distinct response; but will you instruct the ambassador in Dresden, confidentially, that he may discreetly insinuate, that it depends upon the cabinet in Vienna whether the wishes here expressed are fully complied with, and that they completely meet my own views."

Drouyn de Lhuys bowed.

"It will also be needful," continued the emperor, "to talk confidentially in Berlin of the guarantees which Bismarck might be inclined to give us, provided his plans in Germany succeed. You know how evasive and dilatory they are in Berlin on this point. They wish to hear my demands, and I cannot and will not express them definitely."

Drouyn de Lhuys again bowed in silence.

The emperor stood up. His minister also rose.

Napoleon stepped up to him and said with the fascinating smile which lighted up his face with an irresistible charm :

"You are not satisfied, my dear minister; but believe me this policy is the best. We shall gain time, and in political life time is a power which gives everything to those who use it aright."

"I know the value of time," replied the minister, "but perhaps in gaining time we may lose the right moment."

"True," said the emperor, drawing himself up with a movement recalling his earlier years, "yet trust in my star, and in that of France."

"These stars are too bright not to inspire confidence," replied Drouyn de Lhuys, but without any enthusiasm. He took up his portfolio, and said :

"Has your majesty any further commands?"

"I will not detain you," said Napoleon, and shaking his minister heartily by the hand, he dismissed him.

After he had left the room the emperor remained for some time lost in thought.

"I cannot directly force events," he said half to himself, "I must allow them to take their course. If my veto were not heard, I should be obliged to undertake a frightful war, and then? I must endeavour by the careful and prudent study of events to turn them to our advantage."

He placed himself before a marble bust of Cæsar which stood on a black pedestal in his cabinet, and he gazed for some time on the beautifully chiselled features of the Roman conqueror of the world.

"Thou great antetype of my house," he said, while an electric brightness beamed from his upturned eyes. "At this moment I too must say, *Jacta est alea!* But," he added gloomily, "thy dice were thrown by thyself, and forced by thy mighty hand to fall according to thy will. The pitiless iron hand of fate throws my dice, and I must take them as they fall!"

An attendant entered and announced:—"The emperor's breakfast is served."

Napoleon left the cabinet.



CHAPTER V.

GEORGE V.

NE morning, when the trees on either side of the long avenue leading from Hanover to the royal residence were still clad in their brightest, freshest green, a carriage rolled rapidly along, and approached the gilded iron gate which shuts off the outer entrance to the castle.

The carriage drew up before the entrance to the inner courtyard.

A slight man, somewhat under the middle height, alighted; he was about thirty-six years of age, very fair, with a long drooping moustache upon the upper lip, and he was dressed in black with a grey overcoat.

This man walked in at the side gateway in the corner of the principal building of the old electoral and royal palace, built by the renowned Le Nôtre, and resembling a miniature of Versailles; he passed through a long passage which led directly to King George V.'s cabinet.

Before the door of this cabinet, which was on the ground floor, with a small entrance from the park and garden, sat the king's groom of the chambers. Close to the entrance of the royal apartments was the waiting

room for the gentlemen summoned by the king, chiefly adorned by the portraits of celebrated Prussians. There were represented in life-size Blücher and Ziethen, and there was an exquisite painting of Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, who fell at Saalfeld.

The gentleman who had left the carriage, and reached the entrance to the royal apartments, asked the groom of the chambers :

“Is his majesty alone?”

He had risen and taken the visitor's overcoat, and he replied in broken German with a strong English accent :

“Privy Councillor Lex is with his Majesty.”

“Will you announce me!”

The groom of the chambers knocked loudly at the king's door, and the clear voice of George V. was heard. He cried—“Come in!” in English.

The attendant returned after a few minutes.

“The king begs M. Meding to wait a moment.”

And he opened the door of the waiting-room, which Meding the councillor of state entered.

The room was empty. Meding took up a position on a large sofa.

After about five minutes the door opened, and a gentleman, somewhat bent with age, entered. His hair and moustache were as white as snow, and he wore the uniform of a Hanoverian lieutenant-general, with the golden epaulettes of an adjutant-general. His breast was decorated with the Grand Cross of the Guelphic Order, and with the medals of 1813, and Waterloo. It was General Tschirschnitz, the king's right hand in military affairs, the medium of every appointment in the army.

Meding rose with the words, “Good morning, your excellency.”

"Good morning!" replied the general, in a curt military tone, whilst he laid a large closed portfolio on the table. "Are you here so early? Shall we have long to wait? I hope you have not much to do."

"The king is working with his cabinet councillor, and apparently writing letters; how long that will last, it is difficult to tell. As far as I am concerned I have only a little to do, and my audience will not take long."

The general threw himself back in his chair with a loud groan.

"Do you know, my dear Meding," he said after a pause, "how long I have waited already, during the course of my life?" and he raised himself a little and looked inquiringly at his friend.

Meding by slightly shrugging his shoulders implied that it was impossible to reply to the question.

"Eight years, seven months, three weeks, and four days!" cried the general in a loud voice, and with great disgust.

Meding could not help laughing aloud.

"Your excellency has certainly suffered to the utmost, and your patience has stood the proof!"

"I have a book," said the general dismally, with a sort of grim humour, "in which I have written down every day since I first received my commission from my late lamented master, the length of time I have passed in this waiting room. It now amounts to eight years, seven months, three weeks, and four days. What do you say to that? They say," he continued, "that I am sixty-eight years old. It is not true; I have *lived* but fifty-nine years, five months, one week, and three days. The rest of the time I have *waited*!"

And the general threw himself back in the arm-chair with a look of resignation.

"I must say, your excellency," said Meding, "it would never have occurred to me to make a statement of the hours fruitlessly passed in the ante-chamber. I should prefer for them to remain uncertain, and to allow the dark moments passed in this *salle des pas perdus*, to fall into oblivion."

"You are still young, and inclined to dawdle away your time," replied the general, "but I——"

"Your excellency's time is much more valuable than mine," said Meding, politely.

At this moment a bell was heard.

A few minutes afterwards the groom of the chambers appeared, and called—"M. Meding."

He bowed to the general and walked to the royal apartments. He passed through the ante-room, the doors of which were set wide open, and entered the king's cabinet.

In this cabinet, filled with many different flowering plants, and with windows wide open to the garden, sat the king at a square writing-table. George V. was at this time forty-six years of age, a handsome man in perfect health. The regular and classic features of his race were seen in their purest lines in a face beaming with cheerfulness and amiability; but which also expressed much royal dignity. A slightly upturned fair moustache covered the upper lip, and few of those who for the first time saw the king's free movements, and the rapid changes of his expressive face, discovered the fact that he was totally blind. The king wore the uniform of the Jäger guard regiment, comfortably unbuttoned. Across his breast, beneath his uniform, ran the dark blue ribbon of the Order of the Garter. He also wore the small crosses of the Orders of Guelph and Ernest Augustus. Near the king, stood the privy councillor, Dr. Lex, a small, dried-up looking man with thick

grey hair, sharp, intelligent features, and a modest, almost bashful manner. He was in the act of arranging his papers.

A small King Charles spaniel lay at the king's feet.

"Good morning! my dear Meding!" cried the king in his clear voice, "I am delighted to see you. Seat yourself and tell me the news. What says public opinion in my kingdom?"

"Good morning, your majesty," replied Meding with a low bow, as he took a chair opposite the king.

The privy councillor had arranged his papers and slowly withdrew.

"I must impart to your majesty," said Meding, "that public opinion is much excited, and is making every effort to urge on a war; it desires your majesty to unite with Austria, and at once take a decided step against Prussia."

"Why so?" asked the king, "the amiable newspapers of the opposition often sigh for a Prussian head."

"Why, your majesty," replied Meding, "it is difficult to say why—so many and such different influences are at work; but the fact remains—all public opinion in the kingdom of Hanover craves to unite in common cause with Austria."

"Extraordinary," said George V.; "Count Decken spoke just in the same tone when he was here yesterday; he was furiously Austrian!"

"Count Decken, your majesty, speaks from the heart of the German union he created. He is also a violent admirer of Herr von Beust——"

"I know! I know!" exclaimed the king, "but is he quite right in saying that the whole world—the army, especially the younger officers,—predict a war with Prussia?"

"He is right, your majesty," replied Meding.

The king thought for a moment.

"And what do you do to stem this flood?" he then asked.

"I seek to calm, to guide, and to enlighten as far as my influence extends by means of the press, for I consider this flood pernicious; it tends to war, the greatest misfortune which could fall upon Germany, and such a war would place Hanover in a most dangerous position."

"Right! quite right!" cried the king, with animation, "every thing must be done to allay this warlike and anti-Prussian excitement. You know how strong is my conviction that a good understanding between the two first powers of the confederacy is the only sure foundation for the welfare of Germany, and what efforts I have made to maintain this. You know, too, how highly I prize the friendship of Prussia. They call me," added the king, "the enemy of Prussia, but indeed I am not. I defend my right of perfect independence and sovereignty, but I most ardently desire to live in peace and unity with Prussia. Those who would interrupt this peace are ignorant of the true interests of both states. They talk in Berlin of the policy of Frederick the Great; how little they understand his policy! How highly did Frederick II. esteem the alliance of Hanover, from whence he obtained the Duke of Brunswick, his best general! And how great and beneficial were the results of this alliance, though it was directed against Austria. Oh! that it were possible to unite the two powers in a real and lasting friendship, and that it might be granted me to be the dot over the *i* in this alliance! But should a rupture—which God forbid!—actually occur, I will take no part in so deplorable a war on either side."

The king said all this with the clearness and decision

with which he always spoke to those completely in his confidence, for he loved to express his views to them on every question with great distinctness, that they might be able fully to carry out his plans and wishes.

"You are very right," he added, "in doing all you can to oppose this warlike and anti-Prussian propaganda."

"I am rejoiced," exclaimed Meding, "to hear your Majesty's views so plainly stated. My position, from being by birth a Prussian, is in this crisis extremely painful. What I regard as most desirable for the interest of Hanover and your majesty, purely from my own conviction, may easily be imputed to other motives, and will by some be so imputed. It is therefore doubly necessary that I should always be completely informed what your majesty's views really are, that I may act accordingly."

"Do not trouble yourself to fight against foolish notions," said the king, with his peculiarly engaging and gracious smile. "I am sure, my dear Meding, you will always have my interests and the interests of Hanover at heart. You know I regard public opinion as the sixth great power of Europe—perhaps as the first—and the press, the organ of this great power, I wish to use as a mainspring of royalty. I desire to hear what the people say and think, and, in the organs of the government alone, to see my wishes and intentions expressed. I wish to know the real thoughts and opinions of the people, whether they are right or wrong, and I wish the people to know my views and desires. Thus perfect openness exists between my subjects and myself, and the interests of the crown are furthered. You know so well how to express my thoughts, and have created for me what I long ardently desired and held to be necessary—do not fear any mistrust or misconception."

And the king offered his hand to Meding. He rose and pressed his lips on the royal hand.

"Your majesty has always permitted me," he then said, "to express my views and opinions freely and without reserve on all questions of state, whether foreign or domestic, and this right is an unspeakable assistance in the fulfilment of the difficult task which your majesty has given me. I humbly beg your permission in this grave moment freely to express my opinion."

"Speak, speak, my dear Meding, I listen anxiously," said the king, as he leant back in his arm-chair, and supported his head with his hand.

"Your majesty knows that it is a kind of *mot d'ordre* of German, yes, even of European diplomacy, *not* to believe in a war between Prussia and Austria. This seems to me like the conduct of the ostrich, who hid his head, hoping to escape danger by not seeing it."

"You believe in war, then?" asked the king, without changing his place.

"I believe in it, your majesty, from the present state of affairs. The disputed questions are on a steep incline, and have rolled down too far to return. The despatches from Berlin and Vienna confirm my views that war is inevitable, as well as the Austrian and Prussian official and unofficial press."

"They speak most peaceably, you told me so yesterday," interrupted the king.

"Exactly for that reason I believe both sides are determined on hostilities. If they only wished to threaten, and to use their armaments as a weight in the balance, by which they might obtain a diplomatic compromise, all the government newspapers would be clattering the sword. These assurances of peace disquiet me. Each side seeks the best *casus belli*, and desires to throw the

blame of a rupture on the opponent. I am convinced we shall soon be in the midst of war unless a miracle occurs. Count Platen will not believe it."

"The ostrich," said the king.

Meding smiled, and proceeded:—

"This situation is more dangerous for your majesty and for Hanover than for any other state. In the moment of action Prussia will respect nothing."

"I have already declared that under any circumstance I shall remain neutral," said the king.

"Certainly, your majesty; but no treaty is concluded. Count Platen has only expressed your majesty's intention to remain neutral generally to Count Ysenberg; but, from fear of giving offence in Frankfort and Vienna, no negotiations are proceeding and no treaty is concluded."

"Do you regard a formal treaty as needful?" asked the king.

"I regard it as indispensable. Prussia will willingly conclude such a treaty now, and once concluded she will respect it. In the moment of action she will ask more, and after victory, I think a treaty of neutrality will be the guarantee of the independence—yes, even of the existence—of Hanover."

The king sat upright.

"Do you hold it possible that Prussia could think of attacking the existence of Hanover?"

"I would neglect no guarantee to the contrary," replied Meding; "the war about to break out is a war for existence: old Germany will fall in ruins; under such circumstances we must not expect to be particularly respected. A veritable treaty of neutrality, concluded now, not only secures our existence, but perhaps our full independence in a new Germany, for, I must repeat

it, I believe if Prussia once signed such a treaty it would under any circumstances be respected."

"But," objected the king, "they are daily telling me how prejudicial a treaty with Prussia will be, supposing Austria is victorious."

"I have heard this remarkable logic," replied Meding, "and I cannot understand it. If Austria is the conqueror, will she give Hanover to Prussia? Besides, your Majesty knows I do not believe in Austria's success."

The king was silent.

"It is a difficult position," he said, at last. "Sir Charles Wyke was here yesterday, conjuring me to be firm to Austria and the confederacy. He brought me a letter from Lord Clarendon to the same purport."

The king took a small key and opened a sliding panel in his writing table, and, after feeling in the recess for a minute, he handed Meding a letter across the table.

"Read this."

Meding looked through the paper.

"I quite understand the policy of England, your majesty," he then said: "in London they wish to maintain peace at any price, yet they desire to lecture Prussia on the Danish question. They hope, if your majesty places yourself decidedly and without reserve on the side of Austria and the Saxon party in Frankfort, Prussia will withdraw from the struggle in alarm, and make concessions, perhaps call on England to mediate; by which means the English cabinet might find an opportunity of effecting something in favour of Denmark. I think they are quite out in their reckoning. But be it as it may, your majesty has to guide the policy of Hanover, and not of England. Lord Clarendon's letter is useless, unless he promises the English fleet to back it up. If your majesty should get into danger and difficulty from

following the advice here given, not a single English man-of-war would come to your assistance. England undertakes the part of that evil demon, who appeared to Hector under the form of his brother Deiphobus, and who urged him to the combat with Achilles, but who had vanished when the Trojan hero looked round for a fresh spear. I wish," continued Meding, after a short pause, "to tell you of an idea, which if carried out would greatly remove the objections made to the conclusion of a treaty of neutrality."

The king raised himself in his chair, and fixed his eyes with a look of such interest on the speaker it was almost impossible to believe them sightless.

"Your majesty doubtless remembers," said Meding, "the immense advantage derived from your close alliance with Hesse Cassel during the last political crisis, and the strong and beneficial influence it had on the course of events; this alliance alone prevented Herr von Beust's unheard-of Augustenburg policy from being carried out, and the whole confederacy broken up. According to my convictions, your majesty in this dangerous crisis should act entirely in concert with Hesse Cassel, and gain the Grand Duke of Oldenburg to take part in an alliance of neutrality. Your majesty would thus be at the head of a group willing to have you for a leader; you would secure the future safety of Hanover, do Prussia a service, and divide the displeasure of Austria amongst several pairs of shoulders. It is my firm conviction that in concert with Hesse Cassel you should conclude a treaty of neutrality with Prussia. Should this treaty not be respected hereafter—which I own I consider impossible—at least a compact body will be ready to defend it. I believe a firm and energetic step in this direction will do more to prevent war than Lord Clarendon's advice of entire devotion to Austria."

When Meding ceased speaking, the king, who had listened to him with the greatest interest, struck the table with two of the fingers of his right hand.

"You are right," he cried aloud; "you are perfectly right."

He pressed with his left hand upon a knob attached to his writing table. The groom of the chambers entered.

"The privy councillor immediately!" exclaimed the king.

As the attendant withdrew, the king said:—

"Do you think the Prince of Hesse will be inclined to take this step with me?"

"I know that the Minister Abée is quite of my mind," replied Meding; "and I know his Royal Highness the Prince of Hesse has the greatest satisfaction in acting in concert with your majesty."

"I must beg you, my dear Meding," said the king, "to go yourself to Hesse Cassel, and propose this to the prince."

A knock was heard at the outer door. The groom of the chambers opened it, announcing—"The Privy Councillor."

"My dear Lex," said the king, "Meding has given me an idea which I wish to carry out immediately. He thinks that I ought at once, in common with the Prince of Hesse, to conclude a solid treaty of neutrality with Prussia. I will send Meding to Cassel without delay, as I am sure he is the best ambassador for bringing the matter to a happy conclusion."

Meding bowed to the king, and said:

"I must tell your majesty that Count Platen quite approves of this step, and has authorized me to tell your majesty so."

"*Tant mieux, tant mieux*," said the king; "what do you think of it, my dear Lex?"

"I perfectly approve," he replied, in a clear, somewhat sharp voice; "if your Majesty had concluded a treaty of neutrality at all with Prussia, I should be much happier, but if it is done in common with Hesse Cassel, the guarantees are stronger."

"Will you kindly draw me up a proposal," said the king to Lex, "with Meding's assistance, for him to take with him to the Prince of Hesse, and bring it to me to sign immediately."

"At your command, your majesty," replied Lex.

"How does the affair of the trades-law go on?" asked the king.

"Your majesty," replied Meding, "the guilds are all much excited, and think the removal of all protection will cause their destruction. I do all I can to enlighten them, and by means of the press, I point to England as an example, where the various guilds, without the intervention of government, exercise so great a municipal influence. I hope the horror of innovation may give way here before clearer knowledge; the minister Bacmeister grasps the whole question with so soothing, so prudent, and so skilful a hand, that I have no fear of its success."

"I am sorry," said the king, "that the good people of the guilds should feel injured; but they will soon find out that the removal of all constraint benefits them, and the guilds, from hated and stagnant institutions, will become powerful living organs. Even if otherwise, the greatest freedom of action is needful, in the sphere of national economy. How much I rejoice to find in my minister Bacmeister, a mind so swift and capable in receiving my ideas, and a hand so skilful in executing them."

"Indeed, your majesty," replied Meding, "Bac-

meister is the most able and talented man I have ever known; personally, he has great influence with the opposition, and almost every evening he is at a kind of parliamentary club, formed by himself, with the assistance of Miguel and Albrecht. Many things have been discussed there in a friendly spirit, which would otherwise have caused the greatest bitterness and strife in the chambers."

"That is exactly what I have always felt!" exclaimed the king; "they talk so much in Germany of public life, and yet they understand nothing of it, since they are not capable of meeting a political foe on neutral ground, as a gentleman.—Were you at the opera yesterday?" he asked, changing the subject.

"No," replied Meding; "but Schladebach told me he was much dissatisfied, and that he should write a severe criticism."

"He is right," said the king. "I shall be anxious to read his critique; Doctor Schladebach has a fine appreciation of art, and much tact in expressing his opinion. If we could but find an equally good critic for the theatre!"

"I am exerting myself to find such a critic," said Meding; "but I must still beg your Majesty's patience. Talent is not easily found, nor quickly formed."

"True, true," said the king, "*chi va piano va sano*; but I hope we may find a critic of real talent. It is indispensable for any form of art, if it is really to flourish, and to fulfil its grand mission. And now adieu, my dear Meding, go with God's help, and with much friendship on my part, to the Prince of Hesse. Come back soon!"

"God bless you!"

Meding and Lex left the cabinet.

George V. remained alone.

For a time he sat quietly in his chair, his eyes fixed on the table.

"It is too true—it is too true," he said at last in a low tone; "the great conflict draws near. The German confederacy, which has been so beneficial, and which for fifty years has maintained peace in Germany and in Europe, cracks in all its parts, and will break up in the mighty struggle. The only hand that could have calmed this mighty uproar with a sign rests in the grave. The emperor Nicholas is no longer here to grasp the rolling wheel of fate with his strong hand. And weight on weight is heaped upon me, now by one, then by the other side; where shall I turn? how shall I save the fair, rich, and faithful land which God has entrusted to me, and which has been bound to my ancestors for a thousand years in joy and woe?"

The king remained silent for some time; then he rose, and, supporting his hand on the back of his chair, he turned to the side of the room where the portraits were hung of King Ernest Augustus and Queen Frederica, and he sank slowly on his knees.

"Oh! Thou almighty, triune God!" he said, in a voice low indeed, but so fervent that it filled the room; "Thou seest my heart, Thou knowest how I have wrestled in prayer to Thee in the dark hours of my life; Thou gavest strength to my soul, to bear my heavy fate, never to look upon the face of wife or child; Thou gavest me light and strength in those troublous times when I first governed this land: bless me now, grant me wisdom, enlighten my understanding, that I may know how to save my country, and lead me graciously through the storms of this day! Yet not my will, but Thine be done; and if it is decreed that care and sorrow must

be my lot, give me strength to bear, courage to endure!"

The king's prayer ceased, and deep silence prevailed. Suddenly a gust of wind slammed-to the open window, something heavy fell to the ground, and the sound of shattered glass was heard.

The small King Charles spaniel barked.

The king started, rose quickly, and returned to his chair. Then he pressed the knob of his electric bell.

The groom of the chambers entered.

"What fell on the ground near the window?" asked the king quickly.

The attendant hastened to look.

"It is the rose, that her majesty the queen had had forced, and that she placed here."

"Is the flower hurt?"

"The flowers are all broken," replied the groom of the chambers, as he picked up the pieces of the pot, and pushed the scattered earth aside.

The king shuddered slightly.

"The flowers are all broken," he repeated half to himself, lifting his head and raising his enquiring eyes to heaven.

"Who is in the ante-room?" he asked.

"General von Tschirschnitz, Count Platen, General von Brandis, and the minister Bacmeister."

"Call all these gentlemen," commanded the king.

The groom of the chambers placed four chairs near the writing table and withdrew.

After a few moments the four gentlemen entered the cabinet, the attendant announcing them by name.

"Good morning, gentlemen," cried the king as they came in; "seat yourselves."

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count Platen zu

Hallermund, a descendant of the well-known Count Platen so frequently spoken of in connexion with the Königsmark mystery, took the chair nearest the king.

He was a man of fifty years of age, with regular and agreeable features, the glossy black of his thick hair and moustache seemed hardly to accord with his years, though it did so completely with the youthful and elastic bearing of his slight and elegant figure.

On the other side of the king sat the Minister of the Interior, Bacmeister, a man little older than Count Platen, but who bore far more the stamp of his age. His thin fair hair was grey, and his features had an expression of weariness, partly from the fatigue of an overworked mind, partly from sickness and bodily suffering. Only when his attention was aroused did his features start into life, his eyes sparkled with high and unusual intelligence, and an expression of fine irony played round his intellectual mouth.

When he spoke, his words were accompanied by the most animated and expressive action, which implied besides the words he uttered many unspoken thoughts, his clear and well-toned voice, his excellent choice of words, combined with this action, and fluent eloquence, greatly influenced even his political opponents, who could not resist the impression, and who usually fell *sous le charme* of this, at first sight, uninteresting person.

Both the ministers wore the blue coat of office, with black velvet collars.

The Minister of War, General von Brandis, was a man seventy-one years old; a follower of the iron Duke of Wellington, he had served in Spain and taken part in the campaigns of 1813 and 1815. Jovial cheerfulness beamed from his fresh, healthy face, which was surmounted by a short black wig. His upper lip was concealed by a small black moustache.

He seated himself at the side of the table, opposite the king, as did General Tschirschnitz.

"I have called you together, gentlemen," said the king, "because at this grave moment I wish again to hear your opinions and to express my will. I have called for you, General Brandis, and for you, my Adjutant General, as representatives of the military relations of the kingdom; for you, Count Platen, as my Minister of Foreign Affairs, to whose especial department the most important questions belong; and for you, my dear Bacmeister, because you know so well the interior condition of the country and the opinions of the people; and," he added with a gracious smile, "because I place extreme confidence in your views and advice."

The Minister of the Interior bowed.

"You remember, gentlemen, that a short time ago in the large council which I held here, and at which you were present, the great question arose of what position Hanover must take in the lamentable quarrel which, unhappily, grows sharper and more threatening between the two great powers of Germany. The military gentlemen, especially General von Jacobi, declared unanimously that the army was not in a state of preparation for immediate war—which God forbid! a mobilization and general military preparation is on political grounds highly undesirable: on the other hand it is necessary, from a military point of view, to make some arrangement to prevent our being surprised unprepared. To reconcile these opinions I commanded the yearly exercises to be held at an earlier time, so that the troops may be more ready to march in case of need, and also that the people may not be inconvenienced by having the exercises during the harvest. The difficulties are constantly increasing, and an outbreak of hostilities appears

unavoidable. Then arises the serious question for Hanover, whether to take part on one or the other side would be possible or advisable; or whether the strictest neutrality should be maintained. I beg you, Count Platen, first to give us your views."

Count Platen spoke:—

"I do not doubt, your majesty, the gravity of the position, but I do not believe a war will really ensue. We have so often seen great *échauffements* in the political world, which yet have all cooled down again. I then humbly give my opinion that the moment has not yet come for forming or expressing any decision."

A slight, almost imperceptible, smile passed over the king's face. General von Tschirschnitz shook his head.

"If it were needful to take a definite and positive course," added Count Platen, "it would certainly not be my advice that we should place ourselves decidedly on one or the other side. We have interests on both sides to consider, and we do not know which will be victorious. Neutrality appears to me our natural course."

"You would advise me, then, to conclude a treaty of neutrality?" asked the king.

"A treaty, your majesty!" replied Count Platen, his slender figure seeming to contract; "a treaty is the last step I should recommend; it would give great offence in Vienna, and if a war never broke out we should scarcely be forgiven."

"But how are we to maintain neutrality without a treaty?" asked the king.

"We can conclude it at any moment," said Platen; "they will be only too delighted in Berlin to find we shall not act against them."

"You would then——" asked the king.

"Gain time, your majesty—gain time," said Count Platen; "we are now in request on both sides, and we should lose our favourable position if we decided positively for either. The longer we wait, the more advantageously we can place ourselves."

The king covered his face and eyes with his hand, and remained silent for a moment; then he turned to the other side, and said:—

"And what do you think, Bacmeister?"

He replied in the low voice which always so magically compelled attention:

"It is always my principle, your majesty, to be perfectly clear as to the later consequences of present actions. The position which your majesty now takes will have very important results. Your majesty can join either Austria or Prussia. Should you cast in your lot with Austria,—and should Prussia be as completely beaten as they hope she will be in Vienna,—and as I do not think she will be, perhaps you would gain more extended power and greater influence in Germany; but should the play be adverse, the forfeit is your crown. Such a policy may be bold and great, but it risks all on the game. Should your majesty decide on this course, the decision must be your own: no minister could advise his master to use his crown as the stake in a dangerous game. Should your majesty join with Prussia, you follow the course natural to Hanover, and in case of victory your position will not be so brilliant, neither do you run so great a danger in case of defeat, for Austria, though victorious, cannot weaken Hanover. But your majesty still fortunately possesses the power of maintaining neutrality, which they are willing to accept in Berlin, and in return you preserve the safety of your country and your crown; perhaps you will even partake of the advantages

of victory without the sacrifices of war. According to my views the decision cannot be doubtful, and I pronounce unhesitatingly for neutrality. But," continued the minister with greater energy, "neutrality must be sealed at once by the most binding treaty. As events progress, I see with dread the moment approaching when Prussia will no longer be satisfied with neutrality alone, but will demand what your majesty cannot and will not grant. Nothing can be gained by delay and hesitation except mistrust on both sides, and at last the complete isolation of Hanover in a war in which we are not strong enough to stand alone and unprotected. I give my voice therefore for the immediate conclusion of a binding treaty of neutrality."

"General von Brandis?" said the king.

The general replied without the least change in the expression of his cheerful, smiling face:

"Your majesty knows I hate Prussia. As a child I remember the occupation of 1803, and the impression made on me then I never lost. I tell your majesty openly, my dearest wish would be gratified if I might draw my old sword on the side of Austria. But I acknowledge that the Minister of the Interior is perfectly right in his reasoning, and I fully subscribe to his views."

"And you, General von Tschirschnitz?" inquired the king.

"Your majesty," said the general, in his bluff, soldier-like voice, "I must strongly protest against the statement that the army is unfit for an active campaign. According to my opinion the army is ready to march and to do its duty, and to gain honour for the name of Hanover, and in the pages of history. I say this from complete conviction, and I shall never alter my views. As to political considerations and interests, I would rather

your majesty did not ask me about them. I own the reasoning of the Minister of the Interior is correct. As a soldier I lament our neutrality, and I would far rather be marching beside you at the head of the brave Hanoverian army. If your majesty has decided on neutrality, I should advise you immediately to make the measure strong and unalterable. I abhor all half measures and uncertain situations, and I have never seen any good result from them."

The king raised himself from the position in which he had been listening, and said:

"You all then, gentlemen, advise the neutrality of Hanover in the deplorable war now, alas! impending between Austria and Prussia. Count Platen, only, believes we ought to gain time, and to put off the conclusion of a treaty, whilst Herr Bacmeister and the generals desire an immediate treaty that we may not lose the favourable moment. For myself, I incline to the views of the Minister of the Interior for the reasons he has so plainly stated. I beg you, my dear count, to act after my views," he said, turning to Count Platen, "and immediately to commence the necessary negotiations with Count Ysenburg."

"If you command it, your majesty," replied Count Platen, with evident reluctance, "yet surely you will wait at least a few days, until the situation is more declared, and we learn what is really taking place in Austria, and their wishes in Vienna. Count Ingelheim imparted to me this morning, that Prince Karl Solms is on his way hither, with an important charge from the emperor."

The king raised his head with an expression of astonishment.

"My brother Karl?" he cried, "what brings him here?"

"I do not know, your majesty," said Count Platen, "and Count Ingelheim did not know, or would not disclose, but we must wait to hear this mission before taking a decided step towards Prussia."

The king considered. Bacmeister shook his head in silence.

A knock was heard at the outer door. The groom of the chambers announced Herr Meding, who entered the cabinet and said :

"His royal highness Prince Karl Solms has just arrived, and requests an audience."

The king rose.

"Where is the prince?"

"He is with her majesty the queen, awaiting your majesty's commands."

The king rang.

"Beg Prince Karl to come," he said to the attendant who appeared; "you, gentlemen," he continued, turning to the ministers, "must kindly remain at Herrenhausen to breakfast, the privy councillor will be your host. My dear general, I thank you, and will no longer detain you. We cannot to-day do our regular work. I beg you to return to-morrow."

The four gentlemen withdrew. Lex walked up to the king's writing-table.

"The letter to the prince of Hesse, your majesty,—a short explanation, that your majesty under any circumstances desires to remain neutral, and confiding the rest to Herr Meding's personal explanation."

"It is quite right, give it me," said the king.

Lex placed the letter on the table, dipped a pen in the ink and gave it to the king, placing his hand on the exact spot on the paper for the signature. The king wrote in large bold characters: "George Rex."

"Is it right?" he inquired.

"Perfectly," replied Lex. He took the paper and withdrew.

Scarcely had he left the cabinet when the groom of the chambers threw open the doors with the words: "His royal highness Prince Karl."

The prince who entered was the king's step-brother, from Queen Frederica's previous marriage with the prince of Solms-Braunfels. He was a man of about fifty, tall and slight, with short grey hair; he resembled the king, though his features were much less regular; his face had the colouring of health, but an expression that told of suffering.

The prince wore the full uniform of an Austrian major general; in his hand he held his hat with its green plume and a sealed letter. On his breast he wore the Hanoverian Guelphic Order, and around his neck the Austrian Order of Leopold.

He hastened to the king who embraced him warmly.

"My dear Karl," cried King George, "what procures me the unexpected happiness of seeing you here? But first tell me how are your people?"

"Thank you for your kind interest," replied the prince, "we are all better at home, and my wife has quite recovered."

"And the Duchess of Ossuna?"

"I have excellent accounts of her."

"And you—how is your health?"

"My nerves plague me at times, otherwise I am well."

"So!" said the king, "and now sit down and tell me what brought you here. I heard a rumour through Count Ingelheim."

The prince seated himself near the king. "I wish I came in less serious times, on a less serious mission,"

he said sighing ; " the emperor sends me to you. Here is his letter."

And he gave the king the note which he held in his hand. The king took it and passed his fingers lightly over the seal, then he laid it on the table before him.

" Do you know the contents; is there anything important in it ?" he asked.

" Nothing important ; only my credentials. My mission is personal."

" Speak then. I am anxious to hear."

" The emperor has determined," said the prince, " to commence a war, and to carry it on with all his power for the future formation of Germany, since he is convinced that by such a war, and by a decided Austrian victory alone, can lasting peace be procured, and lasting safety and independence for the princes of Germany."

" Then I was not mistaken," said the king, " war is decreed."

" It is," replied the prince, " and the emperor ardently desires to be surrounded in this war by the German princes, as he was at the Fürstentag at Frankfort."

" When they tried to catch me," said the king ; " but go on."

" The emperor," added the prince, " prizes the alliance of Hanover above all things. He commanded me to say that he considered the interests of the Houses of Guelph and Hapsburg identical in Germany."

" The Guelphs have always fought against the imperial family," said the king.

" The emperor," proceeded the prince, " hopes that the old and intimate relations between Hanover and Austria may continue during the present crisis. He considers that at the congress of Vienna, Hanover did not receive her proper position in Germany, especially in

North Germany. Called upon to be a powerful and independent barrier against Prussia's hegemonistic struggles, Hanover was yet left too weak through the diplomacy of the Vienna congress."

"Because Metternich's efforts were not supported," interrupted the king, half to himself.

"The emperor," continued the prince, "is desirous of repairing the errors of the Vienna congress by a new formation and organization of Germany, and for this purpose he wishes to conclude an offensive and defensive treaty with Hanover."

"On what basis?" asked the king.

"The most important points of the alliance which the emperor has in his mind are these," said the prince. "Hanover shall immediately place her whole army on a war footing, and in common with Austria, and at the same time, shall declare war against Prussia. In return the emperor will place the Kalik Brigade now at Holstein at your disposal, and will offer you General von Gablenz for a time as its commander. He promises his utmost support to Hanover should the war be unfavourable, and in case of victory he guarantees that Holstein and Prussian Westphalia shall be incorporated with your kingdom."

"In case of victory?" said the king; "do you believe in victory?"

The prince was silent for a moment.

"I am an Austrian general," he then said.

"Lay aside the Austrian general for a moment, and answer me as my brother."

"If our forces are properly led, and actively employed," replied the prince, after a short hesitation; "and if Germany supports us strongly and energetically, we must be successful. Our artillery is excellent, and our cavalry very superior to the Prussian."

"Hum!" said the king; "yet let us put aside these considerations, or you will believe me to be swayed entirely by interested motives, and I assure you it is not so. In this crisis there is a higher principle than success, and by this principle alone will I be guided."

"I humbly beg you," said the prince, "to consider the future advantage and greatness to be gained for your country, and not to forget that Prussia, with her power and her present political tendencies, is a dangerous and threatening neighbour to Hanover."

The king remained for some little time silent and thoughtful.

"My dear Karl," he then said, "be assured that everything that comes from the emperor shall receive my gravest consideration and hearty respect, and that, by giving me the happiness of seeing you as his messenger, he has strengthened still more my feelings of regard. I am always ready to show my enduring friendship to Austria and to the house of Hapsburg. But here—I must say it at once—principles enter into the question, which as the ruler of my country and a member of the German confederacy stand higher than all. At this moment I will give you no definite answer. You can remain here a few days?"

"A few days certainly," replied the prince; "the emperor awaits my return with anxiety, and I cannot stay long."

"I will not detain you long, and your proposals shall at once be laid before my ministers."

The king rang, and said to the attendant who appeared,

"If the gentlemen have breakfasted, beg them to come here."

Shortly afterwards Count Platen, General Brandis, and Bacmeister entered the room.

Prince Karl greeted them separately with great heartiness, and they all seated themselves around the king's writing-table.

George V. spoke :

"The situation we have just discussed is somewhat modified. My brother Karl is the bearer of a proposal from his imperial majesty of Austria of a distinct treaty of alliance under certain conditions. I beg you, my dear Karl, to recapitulate the conditions."

The prince repeated the points which he had previously named to the king,

Count Platen rubbed his hands together laughingly.

"Your majesty perceives," he said, in a low voice to the king, "we are wooed by both sides. What a favourable position our policy has secured!"

Bacmeister shook his head slowly, and twisted the thumbs of his folded hands, an expression of amused irony playing around his mouth.

"Your Highness," he said, "speaks of the important acquisitions of Hanover in case of victory. But what will happen—we must consider every side of the question—if Prussia should be the conqueror?"

"Under all circumstances the emperor guarantees to support Hanover," said the prince.

"How would his imperial majesty be able, if Austria were vanquished, to support Hanover against victorious Prussia?" asked Bacmeister.

"No discussion now, I beg, my dear minister," said the king.

"Gentlemen," he added, "you have heard the proposal. On this occasion I will depart from my usual custom, and at once tell you my views. I take up my position on the standing-point that a war between two members of the German confederacy is, according to

the laws of that confederacy, impossible. Such a war, alas! can and may come upon us, like a convulsion of nature, or some scourge of God;—to contemplate it beforehand, to conclude treaties on the subject, I hold to be irreconcilable with my duty as a German prince. I should by such a treaty take part in the guilt of a rupture of the confederacy so blessed to Germany and the whole of Europe. Never, with my consent, shall Hanoverian troops fight against German soldiers, except from dire necessity.

“But there is another reason why I cannot subscribe to this treaty. I cannot consent to the eventual enlargement of Hanover; I cannot sign a treaty by which I stretch out my hand for my neighbour’s goods. It is my joy and my pride that throughout the country I rule, there is not a foot’s breadth of earth that has not descended to me by legitimate inheritance; shall I now sign a treaty for the acquisition of lands that do not belong to me? Westphalia belongs to the King of Prussia, with whom not only do I live in peace, but to whom, as a member of the confederacy, I regard my obligations as sacred. Holstein belongs by right I know not to whom—to the Grand Duke of Oldenburg, to the Duke of Augustenburg, to Prussia,—I cannot enter into the difficult subject,—certainly it does not belong to me. No, gentlemen, I cannot part with the happy knowledge that I hold my kingdom entirely from God’s justice, and by God’s grace: never,” cried the king, striking his right hand upon the table, “will I stretch out this hand to take what is not mine. Hence, according to my views, the treaty proposed is inadmissible. A proposal, however, from his Imperial Majesty of Austria has an undoubted right to our gravest and most earnest consideration. I therefore beg each of you con-

scientiously to think through this subject, to weigh it deeply, and express all that can be said against my opinions. Not to-day, but to-morrow I will preside at a council of my assembled ministers, including your absent colleagues, in order to decide upon our answer. For to-day I thank you, I will let you know the hour of council for to-morrow."

The king rose.

With grave looks and in silence the ministers left the cabinet.

Prince Solms gazed sorrowfully before him.

"Am I right?" asked the king.

The prince looked at his royal brother with an expression of deep veneration.

"You are right," he said in a low tone, "and yet," he added, his eyes growing sadder and his head sinking down, "yet very, very wrong."

"Now, my dear Karl," said the king cheerfully, "you shall go out with me. I wish to go where you must be my guide."

He pressed on a second knob at the right hand side of his writing-table. The groom of the chambers of the private apartments appeared, from a door leading to the king's bed-room.

"I am going out," said the king, buttoning his uniform.

The attendant handed him his cap and gloves.

"Does your majesty wish for a cigar?"

"No. Inform the equerry on duty that I shall not want him. The prince will accompany me."

The king took the prince's arm and walked through the corridor, passing various bowing lacqueys in their scarlet livery, to the principal entrance. In the hall leading to the door an animated conversation was heard.

"Who is that?" asked the king.

"Count Alfred Wedell and Devrient."

The persons mentioned stood close together in the vestibule engaged in so engrossing a conversation that they did not perceive the king's approach.

Count Alfred Wedell, the king's chamberlain, and governor of the castle, was a tall, strongly-built young man of about thirty years of age, with a healthy complexion, and handsome, though decidedly marked features. He was in undress uniform, a blue coat with a red collar, and he stood opposite the famous Hanoverian actor, Devrient, a man well past sixty, who had taken part in the German wars for freedom, but who felt so little the burden of his years that he still played Hamlet with great success. Neither when off the stage did his animated face, his sparkling eyes, nor his upright figure, show any sign of age.

"Good morning, Devrient," said the king in his clear voice, stopping in the middle of the hall.

The gentlemen broke off their conversation, and Devrient hastened to the king.

"Well, how are you?" said George V. kindly. "Always fresh and active. Devrient is an example to us all," he said, turning to Prince Solms, "he has the secret of eternal youth."

"Your majesty," said Devrient, "the youth you so graciously ascribe to me has a behind the scenes. I am not always before the lamps, the gout is a very poor prompter. I came to beg your commands for the next rehearsal, but I see your majesty is going out."

"I am busy to-day, dear Devrient," said the king, "and to-morrow. Will you come to me the day after to-morrow?"

"At your command, your majesty."

And, with a friendly nod, the king went through the

great entrance, both doors of which had been opened by the porter.

As they entered the courtyard of the castle, where the sentries on guard presented arms, Prince Karl asked :—

“Where are you going?”

“To the mausoleum,” said the king.

Taking his brother’s arm, he walked firmly and quickly through the castle courtyard.

Devrient turned to Count Wedell after he had watched the king for a moment.

“When I see our master walking thus, and when I think of the times in which we live, I could wish to conjure all the good angels of heaven to watch over his dear head. It does not please me,” he added, gloomily, “to see him leaning on the arm of an Austrian general. God grant it may be no evil omen.”

“You are incorrigible!” cried Count Wedell, “will you again rant on politics, and air your hatred against Austria? All Germany takes the emperor’s side; shall the king sacrifice himself for Prussia?”

“I do not love the Austrian uniform,” said Devrient, moodily.

“I wish we had thirty thousand of them here,” cried Count Wedell; “I will remind you of to-day, Devrient, when the great victory is won, and when grateful Austria——”

“Gratitude from the House of Austria!” cried Devrient, with a theatrical tone and gesture; and without saying another word he put on his hat and rushed through the open door, along the broad alley which led from Herrenhausen to the city.

Count Wedell laughed, and shook his head as he retreated into the interior of the castle.

In a deep wood in the gardens of Herrenhausen is

the tomb of King Ernest Augustus and Queen Frederica, similar to the mausoleum at Charlottenburg, where Frederick William III. of Prussia and Queen Louisa rest.

The king and queen lie chiselled in marble by a master's hand upon a sarcophagus, in a building resembling a temple, the light from above falling with wonderful effect upon the beautiful, lifelike figures. The building in its profound stillness and pious simplicity impresses the beholder with the full majesty of death, not to be felt without a shudder, but also with the perfect peace of eternal rest.

A single sentry stood before the entrance.

Four persons were leaving the mausoleum in silence, evidently impressed by the royal tomb. The castellan followed them.

Three of these persons were old acquaintances from Blechow—the pastor Berger, his daughter Helena, and the eldest son of Baron von Wendenstein. Their companion was a young man of about seven or eight and twenty, who was evidently a clergyman, from his plain black dress and white neck-tie; his smooth, fair hair hung low on his temples, and surrounded a round, shiny face, which was neither handsome nor interesting. His small grey eyes, partly concealed by eyelids habitually cast down, were quick and rather hard, and on his thin, firmly closed lips appeared an expression of self-satisfaction and ascetic assumption, which formed a remarkable contrast to the amiability and calm cheerfulness of old pastor Berger, who wore his usual dress—a closely buttoned black coat, and the square *berretta* of the Lutheran clergy.

The whole party advanced slowly up the wide avenue leading from the mausoleum to the park immediately surrounding the castle.

They had not gone far from the mausoleum, when they heard the sentinel present arms, and the castellan said in a low voice :—

“His majesty the king !”

George V. appeared from a side walk, leaning on the arm of Prince Solms.

The three gentlemen removed their hats, and they all respectfully stood still.

“They are acknowledging you,” whispered the prince.

The king touched his cap.

“Who is it ?” he asked.

“From his dress, a Lutheran clergyman,” replied the prince.

The king stood still and exclaimed :

“Herr pastor !”

Pastor Berger walked up to him and said in a firm, clear voice,

“I salute most respectfully my royal master and supreme bishop !”

The king started when he heard his voice.

“Have I not met you formerly in Wendland ?”

“It is too gracious of your majesty to remember it. I am the pastor Berger from Blechow.”

“Quite right, quite right,” exclaimed the king with satisfaction ; “I remember the great pleasure your loyal reception gave me, and all the interesting things you told me of the customs of your people. How glad I am to meet you here ! What brings you to Hanover ?”

“Your majesty, my strength is not what it used to be, and I am obliged to think of procuring some assistance that my flock may not suffer from my increasing age. The service must not grow old and feeble. I therefore greatly wish my sister’s son, the candidate Behrman, to be appointed as my adjunct, and, if God

wills, my successor in my holy office. I came hither to make my request to the consistory."

"It is granted, my dear pastor," cried the king; "the qualifications of your nephew are doubtless correct, or you would not make the request. Your nephew is your adjunct. How happy I am to fulfil your wishes here and at once."

Touched and surprised, the pastor could only say: "I thank your majesty from my heart."

"And now, my dear pastor, I must take care that you are shown everything worth seeing in Hanover. Make yourself quite at home at the castle. To-morrow I shall expect you to dinner; come an hour beforehand. You must tell me much about my dear, faithful Wendland. Have you seen the park and the hot-houses?"

"We were on our way, your majesty. I have just left the mausoleum, and I am still deeply impressed. I lifted up my soul to God there, and prayed fervently that he would protect your majesty in these difficult and dangerous times."

The king looked very grave.

"Yes," he then said, "the days are dark and difficult, and we need God's blessing. I will do what you have done. I will pray at the grave of my parents for strength and wisdom. Farewell; we meet to-morrow."

And with a soldier's salute he turned away and walked towards the mausoleum.

Pastor Berger looked after him with great emotion; he raised his hand as if impelled by some unseen power, and he said in a clear voice, which resounded strangely through the wooded solitude:

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee! The Lord lift up the light of His countenance and be gracious unto

thee! The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace! Amen!"

At the first words of this blessing, King George stood still and removed his cap. A deep feeling of devotion appeared in his face.

As the pastor's words ceased, he covered his head, greeted him by a silent movement of the hand, and slowly entered the quiet, simple building, which protected the last rest of his parents.





CHAPTER VI.

AN ERRING METEOR.

IN the boudoir of the house in the Ringstrasse, where Lieutenant von Stielow had repaired after Count Mensdorff's soirée, the same wonderfully beautiful woman who had received him with such glowing passion lay stretched upon a couch.

She wore a pearl-grey morning dress with light rose-coloured ribbons, and a white lace handkerchief surrounded the fine oval of her face, and nearly concealed her glossy hair.

The morning sun streamed through the window hangings of her very elegantly furnished room. The reflections that played over her face at every movement were most becoming to the young lady's extreme loveliness, and apparently she knew it, for she glanced from time to time at a round mirror, which was so placed on the opposite wall as to show nearly the whole of her form, and she was careful not to withdraw the dark red cushion on which her head lightly rested, from the softened sunbeams.

Her features did not wear the enchanting expression of softness and enthusiasm with which she had received

Lieutenant von Stielow; an icy coldness rested on her face, and a look of scorn played round the beautiful lips, which were slightly parted and showed her white teeth to be firmly closed.

Before her stood a man of about thirty, dressed with a much greater adherence to fashion than is usual amongst persons of real distinction. His features were not ugly, but they were common, and his appearance betokened a dissipated man of the second or perhaps third rank of society.

This man, who accorded so ill with the really elegant arrangements of the boudoir, and still less with the graceful and æsthetic beauty of the young lady installed there, was her husband, the merchant and exchange agent, Balzer.

The conjugal tête-à-tête did not appear to be of an agreeable nature, for the husband's face bore evident traces of anger and scornful irony.

"You know me," he said, in a rough voice, which betrayed too great an indulgence in stimulants, and nightly dissipation, and in the rude manner only found amongst uneducated persons, destitute of good breeding. "You know me and you know I will have my wishes attended to. I must have twelve hundred gulden, and have them by to-morrow," he cried, stamping with his foot on the ground.

The young lady played with a bow on her dress; its rosy colour was not softer nor brighter than her small finger tips, and she replied without altering her position or looking at her husband, in an almost hissing voice:—

"Then gamble luckily, or cheat some of the people who trust you with their business on the Bourse."

"Your sneers are lost upon me," he said, with feigned indifference; "I believe we may both spare ourselves the

trouble of displaying our wit. I am practical, and above all things a man of business," he added, with a cruel laugh; "you know our compact, and you know under what conditions I, your rightful lord and master, shut my eyes to proceedings to which I might strongly object—if some day it should please me to do so."

She did not move a muscle, but the slight blush which passed over her beautiful white brow, showed some inward emotion.

Without in the least modifying her tone, she said coldly:—

"You also know how easy it would be for me to free myself from the chains with which you threaten me. You must know me well enough to feel sure that my conversion to Protestantism would not give me a moment's uneasiness, if I wished to obtain a separation."

"I do not think religious compunctions would ever trouble you," he said, scornfully.

"Well, then," she said, calmly, without looking up, "I only continue to endure this heavy chain, because I wish to avoid scandal, and because I do not wish a creature"—and this she said with unbounded contempt—"whose name I bear, to fall into the lowest depths of vulgar crime. These are my only reasons for enduring and maintaining you. Take care of making the chain heavier than it is. As to what you are pleased to term our compact, on my side it has been punctually fulfilled. Have you not regularly received what I promised you?"

"I am not talking about that," replied Herr Balzer, rudely; "I am saying what I want, to meet unavoidable debts, and I must have twelve hundred gulden and you must get them for me,—you *can* do it easily. Your little Uhlan lieutenant is an inexhaustible gold-mine," he continued, with a low laugh.

"I am sorry," she replied, coldly, "that you require another gold-mine."

"You wish to avoid scandal, as you said just now. Eh bien! I will arrange a fine scandal for you as soon as he comes."

"Such a scandal," she said, smiling, "would cause you to be kicked down-stairs, neither would you ever receive another kreutzer from me."

He was silent for a moment, her simple logic seemed to make some impression upon him. But after a short time he came a step or two nearer to her; a horrible smile played round his mouth, and spiteful satisfaction shone in his eyes.

"You are right," he said, "such a scandal would be aimless. But since your dear Herr von Stielow is so ungenerous, I shall take care that you break with such a sterile friend, and turn to others who bear more of the golden fruit. Herr von Stielow shall be freed from the sweet chains in which you hold him captive. I am sorry to give pain, for it seems as if this little Uhlan had somewhat touched the hitherto icy heart of my wife. But what must be, must—business first and pleasure afterwards."

Her slender fingers trembled slightly, but she grasped the ribbons she held firmly, and for the first time during the conversation she raised her dark eyes. She flashed a piercing look at her husband; he perceived it, and smiled triumphantly.

She cast down her eyes again and said with a slight vibration in her voice:

"You are at liberty to do what you like."

"Of course," he replied, "and I shall act with great prudence and avoid all scandal. I am sure it will be very interesting to Herr von Stielow to compare the ex-

ercises of style which he receives from the lady of his heart, with those she sends at the same time to earlier and absent friends."

"What do you mean?" she asked quickly. She raised her head from the crimson cushion and gazed full at her husband.

"I mean," he replied brutally, "that I shall send Herr von Stielow one of Count Rivero's letters to you, and your answer. Though husbands are sometimes indifferent to these little eccentricities, lovers are apt to be more punctilious."

She pressed the rosy nails into her tender hands, and looked thoughtfully before her for a moment.

"Where are the letters of which you speak?" she asked coldly.

"Quite safe," he replied laconically.

"I do not believe you; how came you by a letter from me to the Count?"

"You were in the act of answering him. His letter and your reply lay on the table, when you had hastily to receive your dear Stielow, and you threw your shawl over them. You forgot them, and when I paid my dear wife a visit, I took them that they might not fall into improper hands." He said this with a scornful laugh.

"In fact, you stole them?" she said contemptuously.

"We are discussing the seventh commandment, not the eighth," he said rudely.

"I must pay for my carelessness," she muttered to herself. Then raising her eyes, with icy coldness she said:—

"You shall have the twelve hundred gulden to-morrow morning in exchange for the stolen letters."

"I will be here punctually at the same hour to-morrow," he replied in a satisfied tone. "Has my charming wife any other commands?"

She raised a finger and pointed to the door.

At the same moment a bell was heard.

"Herr von Stielow!" exclaimed the waiting-maid as she entered. The clatter of a sword was heard in the ante-room.

"A good business and much pleasure!" cried Herr Balzer, as he departed by a side door.

Scarcely had he left the room, when the young lady's expression changed as if by magic. All the hard sharp lines, which had caused her face during her conversation with her husband to look like a beautiful waxen mask, disappeared, the clenched teeth were parted, and the eyes gained a magnetic brilliance, which gave them a magical charm.

She half rose and stretched out her arms.

Herr von Stielow, fresh, bold, and elegant as ever, hastened to her; he seemed for a moment dazzled by her beauty, then he bent over her and pressed his lips upon her mouth.

She wound her arms around his neck, and breathed rather than said, "My sweet friend!"

After a long embrace he drew a low chair towards the couch on which she lay, so that their heads were on the same level. She altered her position with a slight graceful movement and placed her head upon his shoulder, then taking his right hand in both her own she pressed it to her heart. Whilst her gentle snake-like movements took her nearer and nearer to him, she closed her eyes and murmured:—

"Ah! how happy I am!"

The two beautiful and graceful young creatures formed an exquisite and poetic picture; with all their trembling passion there was no sign of vulgar or ignoble feeling,—it seemed a picture of a pure and happy love.

The face of the beautiful woman showed no trace of the scene she had just taken part in, in that very room, and no one could have thought, had they looked at the young man as he pressed his lips against the perfumed hair of the head resting on his shoulder, that notwithstanding the enchanted mist that surrounded him, a purer star was shining ever brighter for his heart.

It was a picture of the present, of a happy fleeting moment, enjoyed without a thought of what went before, of what must follow.

A deep sigh heaved her breast and trembled through her form as she leant against her lover.

"Why do you sigh? my sweet Tonia. What happiness is wanting to her who is created to give happiness?"

"Oh! my beloved," she said, and a second sigh trembled from her lips, "I am not always so happy as now, when I rest on your breast, and just before—" she hesitated.

"What happened just before?" he asked, "to make those lovely lips twice sigh, though formed only for smiles and kisses?"

And he slightly raised her head and pressed his lips to hers.

"My husband was here," she said, sighing the third time.

"Ah!" he said, "and what did the fellow want who calls such a flower his own, and knows not how to enjoy its fragrance?"

"For him it never shall be fragrant," she said with a vibration in her voice, which recalled the previous scene. "He tormented me," she continued, "with reproofs—with jealousy."

She stammered, then she raised the beautiful head from his shoulder, slipped back a little and replaced it on her crimson cushion, but she still retained his hand.

"Before," she said, "when he used to reproach me, and act Othello, because this or that gentleman looked at me too often, or another had smiled when he saw me, I was quite indifferent; I despised it all, and answered without my heart beating faster, or my eyes being cast down, but now," she added, tears coming to the eyes she rested on him, and the rosy ribbons on her breast rising and falling quickly from her emotion, "now I tremble; I wish to hide my eyes with a thick veil; my heart beats fast, as the blood throbs through my veins, for—"

Again she threw herself into his arms, leant her head as if exhausted on his breast and whispered,

"For now I love!"

He bent over her and pressed her to himself.

"And do you repent it?"

"No," she replied passionately; "but it humbles me when I remember that he is still my husband, on whom I am dependent—dependent," she stammered, in a low voice, "in all material things; and he makes me feel this dependence—feel it bitterly."

"And why," he interrupted, "should you be dependent upon him? Why remember such dependence for a moment? Have you not a friend, a slave, who would be too happy if you would but tell him what you want, all that you wish?"

"Ah! I want so little; but he denies me everything!" she said.

"Poor Tonia!" he cried; "is it possible those lips have ever framed a wish in vain?"

He put her hand to his lips.

"What was it, what did he deny you?"

"Oh!" she cried sadly, "that I should profane the sweet hours of our love—leave it—it is already forgotten!" and she sighed again.

"It cannot be forgotten until you have told me. I beg you, if you love me, tell me what vexes you, that this melancholy may all be driven away."

"He was angry with me," she replied, without raising her eyes, "about my dressmaker's bill, and positively refused his assistance; and," she said with animation, "such troubles torment me so, these things suit neither my head nor my heart—where one thought alone, one feeling reigns."

"Only one word more," cried he cheerfully, "the amount of the wretched bill, that so presumptuously seeks to share with me this lovely head, this sweetest heart."

"Two thousand gulden," she whispered.

"What economy!" he cried; "yet your perfect beauty does not need the aid of dress. I humbly beg to be allowed to chase this cloud from the bright eyes I love."

And he kissed her on both eyes.

She hastily pressed her lips on his hand.

"That I must receive, always receive!" she cried. "Oh! that I were a queen, and you poor and unknown, that I might shed rays of splendour and happiness over you, and, preferring you among a thousand, might draw you up the golden steps of my throne!"

She had risen, and she now sat with a really royal dignity. Her eyes shone with dark fire, and as she slightly raised her hand, a man had sworn that at a sign from that fair hand, armies would march and a thousand courtiers kneel in the dust. Then she cast down her eyes and said in gentle melting tones,—

"I have nothing to give but my love!"

"And more I do not wish for, from my queen!" he cried, rising from his low chair and sinking on his knees, whilst looking up at her with glowing eyes.

She took his head in both her hands and pressed a long kiss upon his brow.

Suddenly the sound of a bell rang through the room.

A noise was heard in the ante-room.

The servant entered hastily, and cried, more as if giving an alarm than making an announcement: "The Count Rivero!"

The young lady rose hastily. Roughly and vehemently she pushed Herr von Stielow back into his chair.

Her face was very pale.

Stielow looked at her with amazement.

"Decline this ill-timed visit," he whispered.

"It is an old acquaintance, whom I have not seen for a long time," she said in a constrained voice, "it is—"

Before she could conclude, the *portière* of the ante-room was pushed aside and a tall distinguished-looking man of about five-and-thirty entered; his dress was dark in colour, his face was noble, with regular features and the clear pale complexion of the South, his large dark eyes were surpassed in depth of colour only by the blackness of his short hair and moustache.

Count Rivero approached the young lady of the house with the quiet self-possession of a perfect man of the world, whilst his dark eyes shone with a warmer glow.

She offered him her hand, he took it and pressed it to his lips for a longer time than politeness alone required.

This did not escape Herr von Stielow, whose astonishment began to partake of mistrust.

"From a sudden change in my affairs, I am able quite suddenly and unexpectedly to return here much sooner than I expected, and to have the pleasure of again meeting my friends in Vienna. My first greeting naturally is to you, fair lady, the loveliest flower in the wreath of my recollections of Vienna."

He again pressed to his lips the tender hand he had retained in his own, and he then seated himself in an arm-chair, whilst, with a slight bow to Herr von Stielow, he cast a look of enquiry at the lady.

She had completely recovered from the disquiet and painful surprise which the count's arrival had caused. Her eyes were bright, her lips smiled, and a faint rosy tinge was seen on her cheeks. In a light graceful way she said :

" Ah ! gentlemen, you are strangers. Herr von Stielow—the rest is told by his uniform—a worthy member of our *jeunesse dorée*, who was just in the act of telling me the latest news of the fashionable world ; Count Rivero, a traveller, a man of learning, a diplomat—according to his whim—he has just come from Rome, and will tell me all about the carnival, or the catacombs, I know not to which scene his heart may have inclined him."

The two gentlemen bowed, Count Rivero coldly, but with the perfect politeness of a man of the world, Herr von Stielow with scarcely concealed dislike.

" My heart," said the count, turning with a smile to the young lady, " has neither the superabundant mirth of the carnival, nor is it yet ripe for the catacombs, but my fair friend loves always to ascribe to me extremes."

" You have not been in Vienna for some time, count ?" asked Herr von Stielow coldly.

" My affairs have kept me in Rome for a year," replied the count, " and I thought I should have stayed there still longer, but necessary business has recalled me here. And I am thankful to necessity," he added, glancing at the lady, " for leading me back to my friends in beautiful merry Vienna."

She threw a rapid glance at Herr von Stielow who

sat biting his moustache, and her lips trembled slightly. Then she said laughingly :

“ And what will you tell me of, count, since neither the carnival nor the catacombs have interested you ? ”

“ Of the beautiful antique statues,” he replied, “ those pictures in marble a thousand years old, yet offering us the image of living youth.”

“ In Vienna you will find no taste for the antique,” said Herr von Stielow, in a voice which caused the count to look up in surprise, “ the world here does not care for the past, but holds only to the present.”

“ The world is wrong,” said the count coldly, a proud smile playing around his mouth, “ the past has depth, the present is shallow.”

Herr von Stielow frowned. The lady gave him an imploring look but he did not perceive it.

“ The past is often tedious,” said the officer shortly.

The count appeared to find his manner disagreeable, he answered curtly, “ And the present often very dull.”

Herr von Stielow’s eyes flashed.

The count rose.

“ My beautiful friend,” he said, “ I am rejoiced to find you so blooming and unchanged. I will see you again soon, and I hope I may find a time when we can talk undisturbed, and I can tell you of Rome and the past without fearing to be tedious.”

He kissed her hand, bowed almost imperceptibly to Herr von Stielow, and left the room.

Herr von Stielow sprang up, seized his cap, and prepared to follow him.

The young lady caught his hand and cried :

“ Karl, I implore you to hear me ! ”

He tore his hand away with an impatient movement, and hurried after the count.

She looked after him with staring eyes and out-stretched hands.

She seemed to wish to follow him, but she stood still, her hands sank slowly, and her head drooped on her breast. So she remained for some moments, and the only sound was her sobbing breath.

"That has occurred which I hoped to avoid," she said to herself in a low voice, "I can do nothing, I cannot interfere, without making the evil worse. They will fight—and how will it end? Shall I lose them both? The count is needful—needful for the future of which I dream—he loves me not; oh! no—but he requires me for his plans, I feel that, and through him I can reach what I thirst after—power, influence, rule. And this young officer, what can he be to me, what can he offer me? he is rich," she whispered, "but what is that? and yet, and yet," she cried aloud, "would I could tightly grasp him, cling to his beautiful head, and draw him back from danger."

"Antonia, Antonia!" she said, suddenly growing cold and hard as she raised her head, "your heart is not dead, you are about to be a slave!"

She shook her head as if to dispel a dream. A look of defiance came to her lips, she drew up her slender form, and her eyes were widely opened in flaming energy.

"No!" she cried, "no, I will not be a slave, not even to my own heart. I will rule—rule—rule," she repeated, her voice growing lower and lower, but firmer and more determined.

Suddenly the violent constraint gave way, her limbs failed and she sank upon her couch, her lovely hands were crossed upon her breast, her head fell languidly upon the cushion, and whilst her eyes were veiled with tears, she whispered with trembling lips:

"Oh, he was so beautiful!"

And she seemed to sink into dreamy unconsciousness.

Herr von Stielow overtook the count as he was going down the steps.

"I did not answer your last remark, count," he said, "because my reply would not have been seemly in a lady's presence. You appear to wish to lecture me, and my name as well as the uniform I wear, ought to tell you, that I will be lectured by no one, at least not by strangers."

The count stood still.

"It seems, sir," he said, "that you wish to quarrel with me."

"And if I do?" cried the young officer boiling over.

"You are much mistaken," replied the count.

"I cannot be mistaken in punishing insolence," cried the young officer, who grew more excited from the count's calmness.

"Very well, sir," said the latter, "I believe we had better cease talking, and leave further arrangements to our seconds."

"I like haste and punctuality in these matters," cried Herr von Stielow.

He handed the count a card.

"I shall wait at home for your second."

"I have nothing to prevent my settling the affair at once," said the count.

And bowing coldly they parted.



CHAPTER VII.

THE DUEL AND THE ROSE.

AN hour afterwards the seconds had arranged all that was needful.

The next morning, in the earliest dawn, two carriages were seen driving to a secluded spot at the farther end of the Prater.

Count Rivero and Herr von Stielow, with the seconds and a surgeon, walked over the dewy ground of a small grassy opening amongst the trees.

The preparations were quickly concluded.

Two crossed swords marked the barrier. The pistols were loaded, and each combatant placed himself ten paces from the barrier. Lieutenant von Stielow was very pale; his face bore traces of a sleepless night, and there were dark circles below his eyes. Yet his expression was calm, almost joyful.

His second, an officer of his regiment, stepped up to him and handed him the pistols.

"There is yet time," he said, "for a little word of apology, and all mischief will be avoided."

"You know I am always ready to bear the consequences of my words and actions," replied Herr von Stielow; "to draw back now would be unworthy and

cowardly. But make yourself easy—I, at least, will do no mischief.”

He took the pistols. The seconds stepped aside.

The opponents saluted with their weapons.

The count looked fresh and calm, and showed no trace of emotion.

He had the first shot, and the right of advancing to the barrier.

He did not take a step forward, but raised his pistol, lowered it slightly, and fired.

Lieutenant von Stielow's képi flew from his head—the ball had hit the upper rim.

The lieutenant raised his arm, took aim for a moment, but, as the seconds could see, much too high, and the ball flew two feet above his adversary's head.

“Count,” said the lieutenant, with calm courtesy, “what honour and custom amongst those of our position required, is now accomplished. I beg to apologize for my words of yesterday.”

The count came forward hastily, a look of great satisfaction shining in his eyes, as a master who is well pleased with the conduct of a pupil. And with dignity, but great kindness, he offered the young lieutenant his hand.

“Not a word more,” he said, heartily.

“Yes,” said von Stielow, “I must beg for one word more, and that I may say it to you alone.”

The count bowed, and they walked together into the wood, out of the hearing of the seconds.

“Count,” said the lieutenant, and his lip trembled slightly, “what I have to say—what I have to request, will, I fear, seem extraordinary to you, but I hope you will reply to my question as frankly as I ask it. Before we had exchanged shots it would have been a new insult;

now I venture to put it as from one man of honour to another."

The count looked at him inquiringly.

"How do you stand with—that lady?" asked Herr von Stielow; "you have a perfect right not to reply, but if you will answer me, you will do me a favour I shall never forget," he added warmly.

The count considered for a moment, and fixed his calm gaze on the eyes of the young man who stood before him anxiously awaiting his reply.

"I will answer you," he said; and he drew from the pocket of his over-coat a letter-case, and taking from it a letter, handed it to Herr von Stielow.

He looked through it. He smiled, half sorrowfully, half contemptuously. The count's dark eye rested on him with deep sympathy.

"One more request," said the young officer, "which can only be justified by the strange position in which we are placed."

The count bowed.

"Will you lend me this letter? I give you my word of honour not to retain it more than an hour, and that no eyes, save those of a certain lady, shall see it," said von Stielow.

"This, too, is granted—a proof of my unbounded confidence."

"I take it, then, and I thank you from my heart."

"And now, sir," said the count, in a deep resonant voice, "permit me to request your friendship. I am older than yourself, and many of life's circumstances, which are still strange to you, lie before me like an open book, and the book of life cannot be read without pain and sorrow. The hand of a friend, of an older and experienced friend, is a great protection—mine is always at your service."

And with a frank and noble movement Count Rivero offered the young officer his hand. Stielow seized it, not without emotion.

"I have behaved like a foolish child," he cried, with candid heartiness, "and I have to thank you for much; perhaps, for a happy change in my life."

They returned to the seconds, and drove back to town.

Herr von Stielow went home, seated himself at his writing table, and placed three bank notes, each for a thousand gulden, in a large envelope; he added the letter with which Count Rivero had entrusted him. He sealed and addressed the packet, then he rang.

"Take this immediately to Madame Balzer in the Ringstrasse. Give it into her own hands," said he to the servant.

Then he stretched out his arms with a deep-drawn breath, and threw himself into an arm chair.

"The meteor has vanished for ever!" he cried; "now shine kindly upon me, thou pure, fair star, whose clear light smiles so peacefully."

His eyes closed; Nature claimed her rights after the wakeful night and the excitement of the morning.

Late in the afternoon of the same day, some of the guests whom we met formerly at Countess Mensdorff's, were assembled in a large and elegant drawing-room of a beautiful old house in the Herrengasse, in Vienna.

The small fire burning in the marble fire-place cast glowing reflections on the polished parquet floor. A hanging lustre, with three branches, shed an agreeable light over the room, and here and there sparkled upon the gold frames on the walls containing the family portraits. Opposite the fire-place stood a large table, upon which was a beautiful bronze lamp with a large

blue glass shade, and the high-backed chairs and sofas were covered with dark blue silk.

The mistress of the house, Countess Frankenstein, sat on a sofa near the table. She was an elderly lady of that type of the Austrian aristocracy which so strongly recalls the old French *noblesse* of the *ancien régime*, but possesses also the Austrian kindliness and Austrian national feeling, a combination which makes the higher circles of society in Vienna so peculiarly attractive.

The lady's partially grey hair was carefully arranged; a high dress of rich dark silk fell around her in heavy folds, and beautifully-set old diamonds gleamed in her brooch, her ear-rings and bracelet.

Beside her sat the Countess Clam Gallas.

On a low chair at her mother's side sat the young countess, in a beautiful toilette, which showed she was going out later in the evening.

Count Clam stood before her, leaning on the back of a chair.

They spoke of the great question of the day, and the whole party were much excited by the ever-increasing certainty of the war about to break out.

"I was with Mensdorff this morning," said Count Clam Gallas; "he told me he could count the days before the declaration of war. After we, as was only right, summoned the confederation to decide upon the fate of the Duchies, General von Manteuffel marched into Holstein."

"But that is war!" cried Countess Frankenstein; "and what has happened? What has Gablenz done?"

"Gablenz is here already," replied the count, "and his troops are returning; we are in too small numbers there, and too much scattered, to do anything. We are daily expecting orders to join the army in Bohemia.

Count Karolyi will be recalled from Berlin, and in Frankfort the decree will be published for the mobilization of the whole of the Army of the Confederation against Prussia."

"At last then," cried Countess Clam Gallas, "upstart Prussia will receive due punishment, and all the evil the Hohenzollerns have done to our Imperial House will be avenged."

"But how about Hanover?" asked Countess Frankenstein. "Is not Gablenz to remain there with his troops?"

"Hanover has not yet decided," said the count.

"Incredible!" cried Countess Frankenstein and Countess Clam Gallas in one breath.

"Has then Count Platen forgotten all his friendship for Austria?"

The young countess sighed.

"What is it, countess?" asked Count Clam Gallas; "our ladies must not sigh when we mount horse, and draw the sword for the honour of old Austria."

"I am thinking of the poor things whose blood must flow," said the young countess, and she looked up as if she saw a picture of some scene of horror.

The door was thrown open, and Lieutenant Field Marshal Baron Reischach announced.

The Baron entered, smiling and cheerful as ever. He saluted the ladies in his knightly style, with the familiarity of an old acquaintance.

"You have grown, Countess Clara," said he jestingly; "this child really looks over our heads."

He seated himself, and held out his hand to Count Clam Gallas.

"You favoured being," he said, "you will soon be in the field!"

"I expect orders hourly."

"We old cripples must stay at home," said Reischach, sadly, and a look of grave melancholy passed over his jovial countenance, but soon vanished again. "I saw Benedek before he started for Bohemia," he then said.

"Has he gone already?" asked Countess Clam Gallas.

"He has started," said the Baron, "and he is now on the road that leads to the Capitol or to the Tarpeian rock. He expressed that in a different way, certainly, but not less excellently."

"Tell us how he expressed it," cried Countess Clam Gallas; "it was no doubt one of those strong speeches which no one but himself would ever think of."

"'In six weeks,' said he thoughtfully, 'I shall either be on a pedestal, or not even a dog will snarl at me!'"

They all laughed aloud.

"Excellent!" cried Countess Clam Gallas; "and does he believe in the 'pedestal?'"

"Not very much," replied the baron; "he does not trust the spirit and the order of the army, and he does not trust himself."

"He may judge of himself as he will," cried Count Clam Gallas vehemently; "but the army he has no right to mistrust. The army is excellent; and its order exemplary; though truly, if General Benedek continues to treat the officers, and especially the noble officers, as he has commenced, and always to take the part of the common soldiers and the sub-officers, order will not last long."

And the count with an angry movement pushed away the chair on which he had leant, and paced up and down the room.

"It is certainly not my place," after a few moments, he said somewhat more calmly, "to call in question his

majesty's choice of commanding officers, but I cannot feel great confidence in this Benedek and his method. The feelings that dwell in the hearts of the old Austrian nobility he cannot understand, and his so-called liberal principles destroy discipline. It may be very well in an army like the Prussian, where every one is a soldier—I understand nothing about that; but for us it will not answer; still less will it answer to attempt novelties which will place the army in opposition to their officers on the eve of a great war."

The count had spoken with much warmth. No one replied, and there was a momentary silence. Baron von Reischach interrupted it by exclaiming—

"But do you know, ladies, the last great excitement in Vienna?"

"No," replied Countess Clam Gallas, "what is it? a fresh success of Wolter's, or a new eccentricity of Gallmeyer's?"

"Something much better than either," replied the baron, "a very piquant duel."

"A duel? and between whom? do we any of us know them?" asked Countess Frankenstein.

"It was between our little Uhlan von Stielow," said Baron Reischach, "and that Italian Count Rivero whom you will remember well; he was here some time back with the Nuncio."

"How very extraordinary!" exclaimed Countess Frankenstein; "has Count Rivero been here long?"

"He came yesterday," replied Herr von Reischach.

"And in twenty-four hours a rencontre took place with Herr von Stielow?" asked Countess Clam Gallas.

"It appears," said the baron, "that a lady is in the case. You have surely heard of the beautiful Madame Balzer?"

The young Countess Frankenstein stood up and

walked to the darkest part of the drawing-room to a flower-table. There she bent over the flowers.

"I have heard the name of this lady in connexion with Herr von Stielow," said Countess Clam Gallas.

"The new rights and the old came in collision," remarked the baron.

"And has any thing serious happened?" asked Count Clam Gallas.

"Not that I heard," replied von Reischach, "but I fear for our friend Stielow; Count Rivero is well known as an excellent shot. But where is our young countess?" he said, breaking off suddenly and turning his head towards the other end of the drawing-room.

She was still bending over the flowers. Her mother gave her a quick anxious look. She came slowly back to the light, with a freshly gathered rose in her hand. Her face was very pale and her lips tightly closed.

"I have plucked a rose," she said, in a voice that trembled slightly, "to complete my toilette."

She fastened the rose into her dress, and took her place again mechanically.

"Ah! I forgot the Countess Wilezek's soirée," cried Countess Clam Gallas rising, "you will wish to prepare, and I must go home first."

"Allow me to accompany you," said Baron von Reischach, and they all took leave.

The mother and daughter were alone. There was a silence.

"Mamma," said Countess Clara at last, "I do not feel well, and I would rather stay at home."

Her mother gave her a sympathising look.

"My child," she said, "remember, I pray, what will be said if you do not appear to-night, especially as you have already been seen."

The young lady supported her head with her hand ; a sob echoed through the silence of the room, and her slender figure trembled, tears fell on the rose in her bosom.

A servant threw open the door, exclaiming, " Baron von Stielow."

Countess Frankenstein looked amazed, her daughter rose quickly ; a deep blush glowed on her face, she sank back in her chair, and her eyes still swimming in tears were fixed on the door. The footman took the silence of the countess for consent, as it was her custom to receive at that hour, and disappeared.

Lieutenant von Stielow entered.

He was as cheerful as ever ; no trace of the emotions of the morning appeared on his face, only his former expression of good-humoured carelessness had gone ; a grave, an almost solemn earnestness was seen in his whole bearing, his eyes shone with a calm brilliance. His unusual earnestness made him look more handsome than before.

He walked towards the ladies. Countess Clara cast down her eyes and played with her handkerchief. Her mother received the young officer with perfect calmness.

" We have not seen you for some time, Herr von Stielow," she said ; " where have you been disporting yourself ? "

" Our duty is more strict than it was, countess," said von Stielow, " and leaves us but little time—war seems decided upon, so we ought to get a little accustomed to some of its inconveniences."

" Herr von Reischach has just been here, and he spoke of you," said the countess.

" What did he say ? " cried von Stielow anxiously ; " he told, I fear, some malicious history ? "

And his eyes sought the young countess, who continued to look down, and who made no movement.

"He caused us to fear that something had happened to you," said the countess, glancing at him from head to foot, "but I see he was mistaken."

Herr von Stielow smiled, but it was not the merry laugh he would have given a short time before at the lucky termination of a duel; it was a serious happy smile.

"Herr von Reischach takes too great an interest in me," he said, "and the fears he expressed on my behalf are groundless."

Countess Frankenstein looked round quickly at her daughter.

"Are you going this evening to Countess Wilezek's?" she asked.

"I have never been introduced to her," replied the young officer in a tone of regret.

"At least you will accompany us there, will you not?" said the countess rising; "I have a slight alteration to make in my toilette; my daughter is quite ready and will entertain you until I return."

Herr von Stielow rose and said, joy beaming from his eyes:

"I am quite at your commands, countess."

Countess Frankenstein left the room without heeding the appealing looks of her daughter. The two young people were left alone. They were silent. At last Stielow approached the young lady's chair:—

"Countess Clara!" he said in a low voice.

The young countess raised her eyes and looked at him with surprise, while an expression of pain appeared on her lips. The light fell on her face as she lifted her head, and he saw that her eyelids were slightly red.

"Good heavens!" he cried, "you have been weeping?"

"No," said the young lady firmly, "I have a headache. I have begged mamma to leave me at home this evening."

"Countess Clara," he said, in the same earnest, gentle voice, "I wish to give you an answer to a question—an explanation," he stammered, "of a conversation we had at Countess Mensdorff's. I have never since spoken to you alone."

She interrupted him.

"This is scarcely a time to answer questions," she said, with a half scornful, half melancholy smile, "which I have already forgotten."

"But I have not forgotten them, and I must give an answer."

She made a movement of refusal. Without heeding it, he asked:—

"Do you believe my word when I give it you as a nobleman?"

She raised her eyes to his face, and said, "Yes."

"I thank you for your trust in me, Countess Clara," he said. "I give you my word of honour I am free—free as the air and light, from every chain."

An expression of joyful surprise passed over her face.

"I do not understand you," she said in a low voice.

"Yes, Countess Clara, you understand me," he cried vehemently, "though I have not told the whole truth. I am free from a fetter which was unworthy; but I seek a chain to bind me for ever to my happiness—a chain that I can wear without a blush."

She was extremely agitated. She looked at him for a moment before she again cast down her eyes, and in that look he thought he read an answer to his hopes, for, with a happy smile, he came a step nearer to her.

"I do not understand all this," she stammered; "explain to me."

"I cannot explain," he interrupted, "to a strange lady, only to her who gives me the right to consecrate my life to her, and to have no secret from her."

"Good Heavens! Herr von Stielow," she cried, still more embarrassed, "I ask you seriously to explain."

"Then you give me the right to explain to you?"

"I did not say so," she cried, and rose.

She walked towards the door by which her mother had left the room. He hastened to her, and seized her hand.

"Give me an answer, Clara," he cried.

She stood still, with drooping head.

"Clara," he cried again, in a low, earnest tone, "you wear a rose on your breast. In olden days, ladies gave to the knight whose love and service they accepted for ever, a gift, to be a sacred talisman in battle, and to be with them in death. We, too, are on the eve of bloody days. Clara, will you give me that rose?"

"The rose is a symbol of purity and truth," she said gravely.

"It is the symbol, then, of her who dwells in my heart, and who will dwell there for ever," he cried, and added, in an imploring tone, "Clara, I am worthy of the rose!"

She fixed her eyes on his, and gazed at him for several moments. Then she raised her hand slowly, unfastened the rose from her dress, and held it towards him, blushing and trembling, as she cast down her eyes.

He walked passionately towards her, seized the rose, and covered the hand that held it with kisses.

"Clara," he said, firmly and gravely, "this flower will fade, but the happiness you have given me will bloom in my heart as long as it continues to beat. Heaven, I thank thee!" he cried, "I have found my star!"

He drew her gently towards him.

Without speaking a word, she leant her beautiful head on his breast, and wept gently.

Countess Frankenstein entered. At the rustle of her dress, her daughter hastened to her, and threw herself into her arms. Herr von Stielow approached the old lady.

"Countess," he said, "I can only repeat to you what I said to your daughter in my great happiness. I have found my star. May it not light the heaven of my life for ever?"

The countess showed surprise, mixed with a certain amount of satisfaction.

"I leave the answer to my daughter," said she; "and will abide by her decision."

"And what do you say, Countess Clara?" he asked.

She held out her hand.

"Then may God bless you!" said the countess, as she gently put her daughter from her, and held out her hand in her turn to the young man, who kissed it respectfully.

"Now," cried the countess, "we must go. We shall see you to-morrow, Herr von Stielow. To-day you will only afford us your protection to Countess Wilezek's."

"Oh, mamma," cried Countess Clara, "can we not stay at home to-day?"

"No, my child," said her mother, "people would make remarks, and you know I like everything to be done in the correct manner. It is the foundation of all true and lasting happiness."

"Well, then," cried Herr von Stielow, "adieu until to-morrow; my newly-risen star will light up the night until the dawn!"

His betrothed gave him a smile. There was a half troubled, half roguish question in her look.

He raised the rose he held in his hand, pressed it to his lips, and hid it beneath his uniform upon his breast.

The countess rang. A servant brought the ladies' mantles. Herr von Stielow accompanied them in their carriage to the palace of Countess Wilezek, in Wallnerstrasse. After he had taken leave of them, he walked dreamily through the evening streets of the capital.

Clear merry voices rang through the open windows of the Café Daun. The numerous officers of every branch of the service congregated there rejoiced at the prospect of war, and many cheerful voices rang out into the night, destined soon to be mute for ever.

Von Stielow hesitated for a moment before the entrance of the Café Daun, but the noisy mirth of his comrades did not suit his present mood.

He walked on. He thought over all that had occurred, and rejoiced at the quarrel which had brought him freedom.

He pursued his way along the Graben, by the rothe Thurmstrasse, and, sunk in sweet dreams, he followed the banks of the Danube. He was near the Aspern bridge. A man in a dark cloak came up to him.

"God bless me! Herr von Stielow," he cried, accosting the young officer, "you were going along as if you had become a philosopher, and were seeking the stone of wisdom."

"Good evening, dear Knaak," replied the lieutenant, holding out his hand to the well-known and favourite comic actor of the Karl Theatre, "what brings you here? Is the theatre over already?"

"I do not act to-night," replied Knaak, "and I am just going to the Hôtel de l'Europe, where all our people are to be. Come too, and laugh with us a little."

Herr von Stielow thought for a moment. He felt a repugnance to going home; he was too excited for serious conversation; how could he better pass the even-

ing hours than with these cheerful people, who, in their merry thoughtlessness and happy natures, form an eternal world of youth in the midst of serious life.

He placed his arm within the actor's, and said :—

“Well, dear Knaak, I will come with you, to see if these warlike times affect the humour of the Karl Theatre.”

“My dear sir,” replied Knaak, “all the Krupp cannons added to all the needle guns in the world, could not disturb us,—that is to say,” he added, gravely, “if we were all together. I, for my own part, am often sad enough when alone : for I am a North German by birth, and all my early recollections lie north ; but now I am in heart an Austrian, and the war which is before us makes me very wretched.”

“It must be so with many of us,” replied von Stielow ; “my home, too, lies in the north. It is a melancholy war,—although, as a soldier, I cannot but rejoice that this sword, which has so long been dragged over the pavement, is at last to be used in earnest.”

A slight sigh did not quite harmonize with this warlike zeal ; perhaps he thought of the newly risen star of his life, and feared it soon might set in bloody clouds.

They had reached the large Hôtel de l'Europe, which, with the Crown Prince Hôtel, occupies the whole length of the Asperngasse. They went into the spacious restaurant through the large doorway, and having passed through it, they came to a closed door, through which they heard cheerful voices and merry laughter.

Knaak opened the door, and with von Stielow entered a somewhat small square room, adorned with hunting pieces and pastoral scenes, where a motley company were assembled around a table on which stood a cold supper, already showing in some of the principal dishes large gaps, proving the assaults that had been

made upon it. On the table stood a large bowl filled with fragrant punch; and silver wine coolers filled with ice showed the white heads of champagne bottles peeping from them.

In the midst of the company sat the whimsical queen of the Karl Theatre, the spoilt and sometimes naughty favourite of the public, Josephine Gallmeyer.

Beside her sat her especial friend old Grois, the last remaining actor of the times of Nestroy—a strongly made man with coarse features, with which he was however capable of rendering every shade of expression, and a voice full of comic modulation.

On the other side of the table sat alone and thoughtful the young actor Matras, with his handsome intelligent face, which can represent on the stage of to-day the true old Viennese fun; and near him, in earnest conversation, sat Mademoiselle Schwöder, a dark-eyed young singer, and Doctor Herzel, editor and critic, a man of middle height with a quick intelligent face.

The entrance of Knaak and von Stielow was hailed with joy by the Gallmeyer; she seized a champagne cork lying near her, threw it at them, and cried:

“Thank God for two sensible men. Come here, Knaak, sit by me; and you, Herr von Stielow, opposite, that I may look at your uniform,—I like it. I could not have borne these weary folks much longer. Matras sits there and says nothing, and the Schwöder and the Doctor are like a pair of folded gloves, and then there is old Grois,”—she shook the old actor roughly by the shoulder, —“he has given a moral lecture. You can think how amusing that was.”

She seized a bottle of champagne and poured out a large glass of the pearling fluid for Knaak who sat beside her.

"There, drink it," she cried merrily, "and may it make you witty."

"My life!" she exclaimed, as she looked at von Stielow, who, following her directions, had seated himself opposite; "My life! Herr von Stielow, how handsome you are to-day; whatever has happened to you; you look really splendid!"

"Take care, Herr von Stielow," said Knaak, "if Pepi falls in love with you it is all up with you, 'tis a case of

"And seek I e'er
A knight t' ensnare
Resistance nought avails him."

She tapped Knaak upon the mouth as she cried:

"All very well, but when people look as romantic as Stielow there, they are of no use to me. I wager he has not a bit of room in his heart. Besides," she added, with the greatest gravity, "I don't fall in love so easily. I must see the baptismal registry first."

"What for?" asked von Stielow.

"She must know if he is of age and free to spend his money," said Matras.

"Matras is always thinking of money, poor fellow! he has so little," she cried, "but no, that's not it. You see I made up my mind, my lover and I should never have more than fifty years between us, and so the older I get the younger must be my lover, to make me quite sure that he has no more years than fall to his share. I have made up my mind, and I shall always stick to it."

They all laughed.

"Then you will soon come to swaddling clothes," remarked old Grois drily.

"Papa Grois," cried she, "don't make such bad jokes;

I have enough of them, from 'swaddling clothes' to 'experienced persons.'

"And where is the Grobecker?" asked Knaak.

"She has quarrelled with her duke," said Doctor Herzel.

"What again, already?"

"She maintains he is making love to little Pepi, and she will not have it."

"What a passion it is!" cried the Gallmeyer. "Soon there will only be duchesses and princesses acting in the Karl Theatre. Well, for my part I shall stick to Pepi Gallmeyer."

And she sang,

"My mother is a washerwoman,
And but a ballad girl am I,
And when a sweetheart comes to woo,
Away I to the washtub fly."

"Yes, it is true," said Grois; "you would be spoilt as a duchess. Do you know what she did the other day? The Duke della Rotunda gave us a great supper at his hotel. It was all quite princely, and footmen in white stockings handed the most excellent dishes. Pepi did nothing but gape; at last she said, 'My lord duke, where is the Schwemme? I can't stand this, 'tis too fine for me.'"

"What is the Schwemme?" asked von Stielow.

"It is what they call the second class restaurants in Vienna; they have them in every hotel here to accommodate traveller's servants."

"And they are a thousand times more amusing than that tiresome old duke, with his silver candlesticks and stork-legged lacqueys," laughed the Gallmeyer.

The door was opened hastily, and a beautiful young woman holding a newspaper in her hand entered. It

was Madame Friedrich-Materna, an opera-singer, then engaged at the Karl Theatre.

"Have you heard it yet?" she cried, "war is declared, or as good as declared; it is here in the 'Evening Post,' our ambassador is recalled from Berlin, and the army is ordered to march into Bohemia."

"Then it is all up with us," cried the Gallmeyer, "all up with merry Vienna; and," she added, glancing compassionately at von Stielow, "alas! how many handsome young fellows will get shot."

Old Grois raised his head.

"We must have something patriotic in the theatre, something of the good old kind; monkey tricks won't do, when a bloody tragedy is being played outside."

"I must go to the editor's office," said Doctor Herzel, with some importance. He rose and seized his hat.

A waiter entered.

"Is Baron von Stielow here?" he asked.

"What is it?" cried the young officer.

"Your servant with an orderly; they have been looking every where for you."

"Duty," cried von Stielow, and rose—

"Farewell, my hosts. Your health, Fräulein Pepi."

He emptied a glass of punch and left the room. A cavalry soldier in a cuirassier uniform handed him a sealed official paper.

The young officer opened it. His face expressed happy pride.

"On the staff of General Gablenz!" he cried joyfully.

"Where is the general?" he asked.

"In the Hôtel zur Stadt Frankfurt, Herr Lieutenant."

"All right; I come!"

And with a quick step he hurried along the shores of

the Danube, not dreamily, as he had come, but with head proudly raised, sparkling eyes, smiling lips, and his sword clattering on the pavement.

Suddenly he walked more slowly. A cloud passed over his brow.

"I am to march out to this merry war at which every soldier's heart beats higher, and at the side of a general, whom every Austrian rider regards with pride and admiration, and yet—what a scarcely tasted happiness I leave behind—shall I ever find it more?"

Slower and slower grew his steps, until at last he stood quite still; and lost in thought he gazed into the Danube, where the bright lamps on the bridge were reflected.

"The shining light up there," he murmured, "below cold, grey death!"

With a hasty movement he awoke from his reverie. "What is love," he cried, "if it makes us sad and cowardly! No, my sweet lady, I will be thy brave proud knight, and thy talisman shall bring me honour."

He drew the rose from his breast and pressed it to his lips. Then he walked on with a quick merry step, and with laughing lips he hummed to himself—

"And had she not promised my life to be,
No life would ever be won by me!"





CHAPTER VIII.

FRANCIS JOSEPH II.

THE greatest activity prevailed in Vienna—in the vicinity of the Hofburg.¹ Aides-de-camp and orderlies came and went backwards and forwards to head-quarters, which were literally fringed with staff officers.

Although it was still early, only about eight o'clock, groups of inquisitive people stood here and there in the large court yard, and looked at each coming or going officer with the greatest anxiety, as if he must be the bearer of most important news.

Public feeling was highly excited. Every one knew that important events lowered like a tempest in the air, and that any moment might bring the dazzling flash, followed by the mighty thunder-clap, which would disperse the sultry fog.

The good citizens of Vienna were in a warlike mood. The press had for a long time increased their bitterness against Prussia, and on every side were heard angry expressions against the Northern power, and confident hopes of victory for the Austrian arms.

¹ The royal castle.

Had not Field-Marshal Benedek, the man of the soldiers—the man of the people, just been appointed commander-in-chief of the great Northern army? He would show what the Austrian army could do when taken out of the hands of the “Junker,”¹ and placed in those of a real working soldier.

Though these hopes were loudly expressed, no very joyful looks were to be seen on the faces of the people. It was the language of the lips rather than the heart; for deep in the breasts of the lively gesticulating speakers lurked many a doubt, which gave the lie to the words they uttered. It was a new foe whom they were to oppose—a foe untried since the Seven Years' War, and from that time traditionally feared—a foe, of whose wonderful military organization they had heard and read things that seemed almost fabulous.

But these doubts, however much they might be felt, were not openly expressed, they only served to increase the general oppression that weighed down the spirits of the people, and gave to merry, light-hearted Vienna a character of unusual earnestness.

Suddenly the conversation in the different groups was hushed, and all eyes turned towards the entrance gate of the Hofburg. Lieutenant Field-Marshal von Gablenz appeared, the general who from his brilliant valour and knightly bearing was the darling of the Viennese.

He walked firmly and gracefully into the courtyard, dressed in a grey close-fitting general's uniform, his breast adorned with numerous orders, the Cross of Maria Theresa around his neck, and a plumed hat upon the noble head, with its well-formed expressive features.

He was accompanied by Colonel von Bourguignon, the

¹ The nobility.

chief of his staff, two aides-de-camp, and by Lieutenant von Stielow, in the brilliant Uhlan uniform, rejoicing at the distinction of being so near to the celebrated general.

The crowd greeted von Gablenz as one whom they expected to fulfil their loudly spoken hopes, to give the lie to their hidden fears.

The general replied to their enthusiasm with a military salute, in a friendly but dignified way ; he was aware of his popularity, he did not seek it, but accepted it as something which naturally belonged to him.

He passed through the courtyard with his companions, entered by the large portal, and ascended the steps which lead to the emperor's apartments.

The door of the ante-room was opened for him by the door-keeper with a low inclination. Deep silence reigned in the lofty spacious rooms, furnished with dark tables, high silken chairs, and heavy curtains hanging over enormous windows.

At the door which leads to the emperor's cabinet stood a life-guardsman in military position. The equerry on duty leant against a window-frame and looked down into the court-yard. He was a handsome young man, with short dark hair and moustache, and wore the simple dark-green uniform of the emperor's equerries, with the badge of a major ; he advanced as the general entered, and saluted him.

Baron von Gablenz returned the greeting, and then especially saluted the life-guardsman, (each one of these holds the rank of captain, their own captain being Field-Marshal Count Wratislaw) ; he then held out his hand to the equerry.

" Well, dear Prince Liechtenstein, what have you all been doing in Vienna since I saw you last ? "

" The clock of duty here pursues its everlasting round, "

returned the young prince : " we are not so fortunate as your excellency ; we make no noise in the world, and are obliged to content ourselves with hearing of your valiant actions. You go to pluck fresh laurels——"

" Stop, my dear prince," interrupted the general ; " we must not talk of laurels until they are won. But," he continued, " is his imperial majesty at leisure ? I wish to be announced at once, and to return immediately to the army."

" Count Mensdorff has just gone in," returned the prince, " but he will be certain not to stay long, and as soon as he leaves I will announce you."

The general and Colonel von Bourguignon stepped into a window recess, whilst Prince Liechtenstein conversed with the aides-de-camp and Herr von Stielow.

Whilst this went on in the ante-room, the Emperor Francis Joseph stood before a large table covered with papers, books, and maps, in his well-lighted and simply furnished cabinet. He wore a comfortable loose grey overcoat after the Austrian military fashion. The expression of his face was very grave, and his hand rested lightly on the table, whilst he listened with deep interest to the statements of Count Mensdorff, who stood near him holding reports and despatches.

" That Prince Solms has not succeeded in effecting an alliance with King George of Hanover is most unfortunate," said the emperor : " we shall be unable to threaten the Prussians from that side, and we must do all we can to meet the whole of the enemy's forces in Bohemia, or let us hope in Saxony, for the decisive battle. Do you think an alliance between Hanover and Prussia is to be feared ?"

" Certainly not, your majesty," returned Mensdorff ; " the king will decline an alliance with Prussia, as with

us. His Hanoverian majesty holds strictly to his neutrality, and will engage himself on neither side. I fear the king is placing himself in an isolated situation, which in his position, surrounded as he is by Prussian power, will prove most dangerous to his safety; yes, even to his crown."

"To his crown?" asked the emperor, raising his head.

"Your majesty," replied Mensdorff, "when the first cannon has been fired, Prussia will be utterly regardless of all national laws; and Hanover has long been the object of Prussian desires."

"So long as the sword of Austria is not shattered in my hand by the pitiless storm of war," cried the emperor proudly, "no German prince shall lose his crown."

Mensdorff was silent. The emperor paced the room hastily, and then stood again before his minister. "You do not believe in our success?" he said, with a penetrating look at the count.

"Your majesty, I wear the uniform of an Austrian general, and I stand before my emperor on the eve of a mighty war, when all the banners of the Imperial States will be unrolled. How would it beseem me to doubt the success of the Austrian arms?"

The emperor tapped his foot on the ground. "That is no answer," said he, "I question not the general, but the minister."

"I would," returned Mensdorff, "that I stood as a general before your majesty, or rather before your enemies; then my heart would be lighter;" and he added, almost gloomily, "then I should have greater hopes of victory, at least I could give my life to obtain it. As a minister," he continued after a momentary pause, "I have already given your majesty my opinion, and I can

only again express my most earnest wish—that it will please you to take from me this weighty responsibility, and permit me to draw the sword.”

The emperor made no answer to the count's last request.

“But my dear Mensdorff,” he said, “I know your Austrian heart; does it not beat higher at the thought of again raising in Germany the ancient power of the house of Hapsburg, and of breaking the might of that dangerous rival who would root out Austria and my royal house from Germany, the old inheritance of my fathers? Shall I give up this opportunity, which perhaps may never again occur?”

“Your majesty cannot bear in your heart deeper love to Austria, nor greater pride in your noble house, than I,” replied Count Mensdorff warmly; “and I would give the last drop of my blood to see you again enthroned from Rome to Frankfort, surrounded by the princes of the empire, as lord and leader of Germany; but——”

“But?” cried the emperor with kindling eyes. “Do you believe the object is to be attained without throwing the sword into the balance? That man in Berlin, himself, says, ‘Blood and the Sword must regenerate Germany.’ Now let the sword decide, and may the blood be upon him.”

“I cannot,” said Count Mensdorff, in a melancholy voice, “consider this opportunity as favourable; to open two theatres of war at once, is play which neither the present resources of Austria nor my hopes for her future justify; especially when one enemy is so powerful, and so untiringly energetic, that we shall need all our strength to withstand him.”

“Energetic?” said the emperor softly: “at Olmütz the strong man quietly gave way.”

"Olmütz will not be repeated ; the Emperor Nicholas is dead, and between Alexander and us lies Sebastopol !"

The emperor was silent.

"May I humbly suggest to your majesty's attention," said Count Mensdorff, after a moment's pause, during which he looked through his papers, "that the Duc de Gramont presses for an answer on the subject of the French Treaty, to be concluded on condition that we give up Venetia."

"Can the answer no longer be postponed ?" asked the emperor.

"No, your majesty ; the ambassador declares that an undecided answer will be regarded as a definite refusal."

"What would you do ?"

Count Mensdorff spoke slowly and calmly. "If your imperial majesty has decided, as indeed you have, to undertake at the present moment a mighty war for the re-establishment of the Austrian power in Germany, that object is great enough to set aside every other ; it is noble and costly enough to demand a sacrifice. The house of Hapsburg was powerful in Europe *without* Venice, it has not obtained power with that province ; on the contrary, many embarrassments, troubles, and difficulties. The war in Germany, and about Germany, would have greater chance of success if the enemy in the south were removed, our own army there set free, whilst our alliance with France would hinder Prussia from concentrating her army against us. The enemy would be occupied on two sides, whilst we should be able to throw our whole force on one point, and our present unfavourable position would be turned completely to our advantage. Under such a constellation a second Olmütz would be possible, or, if the sword decided, success would be far more certain. Your majesty," concluded Count Mens-

dorff, calmly meeting the emperor's searching, anxious gaze, "I would yield Venetia."

The emperor bit his lips in silence.

"Must I buy," he cried at last, "must I buy the position of my house in Germany,—must I buy the rights of my ancestors? And from whom? from this King of Italy, who has banished the princes of my race, who threatens the Church, and is even ready to attack the holy patrimony itself. No! no! Put yourself in my place, Count Mensdorff; you will own I cannot do it."

"Forgive me, your majesty," said the count, "but everything must be bought; every treaty is a purchase, and the more valuable the object obtained, the better the bargain. Austria's Italian position, and earlier policy, the correctness of which is doubtful, were given up with Lombardy. Venice cannot avail us much, and would be a hindrance to a possible alliance with Italy."

"You think of an alliance with Italy as *possible*?" cried the emperor with astonishment.

"Why not?" said Count Mensdorff, "if Italy has the whole of what is Italian, she has no further enmity with Austria, and would far rather be a close friend to her, than to France, with whom sooner or later she must struggle for the first place amongst the nations of Latin race."

"And the banished archdukes, and his Holiness the Head of the Church?" asked the emperor. "I cannot do it," he continued, gazing before him: "what would my uncle think, who is preparing to make Italy feel the sharpness of the Austrian sword—what would my whole family, what would history?—what would they say of me in Rome? When Italy is overcome," he said, after a moment's thought, "when we have attained our former eminence in Germany, then we can negotiate about Venice; if then, through this sacrifice, the safety of the

Holy Father and the patrimony of St. Peter can be guaranteed——”

“If your majesty is victorious in Germany, we shall need no negotiations with Italy,” said Count Mensdorff; “but——”

A knock at the door was heard, and the equerry on duty, Prince Liechtenstein, entered.

“A despatch for your imperial majesty from the Field-Marshal;” and he withdrew.

The emperor’s eyes sparkled, and his hand trembled slightly as he tore off the cover of the telegram.

“Perhaps an engagement,” he murmured.

His eyes flew with the greatest anxiety over the lines. He turned deadly pale, and with his eyes still fixed on the paper he held in his hand, he sank upon the plain wooden chair before his writing-table. A short silence ensued, during which the emperor gasped for breath.

Count Mensdorff watched his imperial master with the greatest anxiety, but did not venture to interrupt the painful reflections in which he was plunged by the intelligence he had just received. At last the emperor roused himself.

“A despatch from Benedek!” he cried.

“And what does the Field-Marshal announce?” asked Count Mensdorff.

The emperor passed his hand over his brow. “He begs me to make peace at any price. The army is not in a condition to fight, as he will explain hereafter.”

“Your majesty cannot believe that the Field-Marshal and I have conspired. If he does not believe the army equal to the war which is before us—he, the man trusted by public opinion”—Count Mensdorff said this with an almost imperceptible smile,—“then there must be a strong foundation for my belief.”

The emperor sprang to his feet and hastily rang the golden bell which stood upon his writing-table. The gentleman-in-waiting entered.

"Prince Liechtenstein!" cried the emperor.

A moment afterwards the equerry on duty stood before him.

"Beg Count Crenneville to come immediately. Who is in the ante-room?"

"General Baron Gablenz, with the chief of his staff and aides-de-camp," replied Prince Liechtenstein.

"Very good," said the emperor; "let them come in at once."

The prince immediately summoned the general and his companions. Baron Gablenz advanced towards the emperor.

"I beg your majesty, before my departure for the army, to permit me to express my humble thanks for the command you have bestowed upon me of the 10th corps, and for your gracious expressions of confidence in me."

The emperor replied, "This confidence, my dear general, is no favour, you have deserved it, and you will justify it by the fresh laurels which you will bind around the banners of Austria."

Baron Gablenz presented Colonel Bourguignon, his aides-de-camp, and Lieutenant von Stielow. The emperor said a few words to each in his usually gracious and engaging way. To Herr von Stielow he said—

"You are from Mecklenburg?"

"At your command, your majesty."

"Yours will perhaps be a divided heart; for I fear your Fatherland will be compelled to stand on the side of our enemy."

"Your majesty," replied the young officer with emo-

tion, "so long as I wear this uniform, my Fatherland is where your royal banners wave. My heart is Austrian." He placed his hand on his breast, and pressed closer to his heart the rose he had received the evening before.

The emperor smiled, and placed his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"I rejoice that the general has chosen you, and I hope to hear of you."

Prince Liechtenstein opened the door with the words, "General Count Crenneville."

The emperor's adjutant-general entered. He wore undress uniform. His sharply-cut features of the French type, his short black moustache, and bright dark eyes, belied the fifty years which the general bore.

"Your imperial majesty sent for me," he said.

"I thank you, gentlemen," said the emperor, turning to Baron Gablenz's staff. "I hope the campaign will give you opportunities of performing fresh services to me and to the Fatherland. I beg you to remain, Baron Gablenz."

Colonel von Bourguignon, the aides-de-camp, and Herr von Stielow withdrew.

The emperor seized the dispatch, and said, "I have just received this telegram, on which I desire your opinion. The field-marshal," he continued, his voice trembling a little, "begs me to make peace, as the army is in no condition to fight."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Count Crenneville.

"What do you say, Baron Gablenz?" said the emperor to the general, who had remained silent.

He hesitated a moment before replying, whilst the emperor's eyes seemed to hang upon his lips.

"Your majesty, the field-marshal must have most cogent reasons for his request; usually he fears no

danger, and dashing boldness, rather than cautious prudence, is his characteristic."

"Your majesty's brave and brilliant army unfit to fight!" cried Count Crenneville; "how can the field-marshal justify such ideas?"

"He promises to justify them," said the emperor.

Count Crenneville shrugged his shoulders in silence, whilst Baron Gablenz asked, "*Can* your majesty still make peace?"

"If I place Austria for ever in the second rank in Germany, or rather if I permit her to be thrust out from Germany—yes; if I give Prussia a double revenge for Olmütz—yes! otherwise I cannot."

Count Crenneville looked anxiously at the general, who stood lost in thought. "Your majesty," he said at last, in a quiet, impressive voice, "no one can rate the power of our enemy higher than I. I have been with Prussia in the field, and I know her material and moral power. Both are immense; her arms are excellent, and the needle-gun is a frightful weapon. If we alone were opposed to Prussia, I should go to the war with a heavy heart. I am reassured by our German Confederation."

"The army of the confederacy," said Count Mensdorff.

"It is not the military contingent alone that I throw into the balance," continued Baron Gablenz, "but the fact that these separate armies will absorb the Prussian troops, and compel the enemy to a complicated campaign. Had I been able to remain in Hanover, this advantage would have been still greater. However, even without that combination Prussia must fight with very divided forces, whilst we shall be able to concentrate our army. This, your majesty, is my comfort; in this rests my hope of success, however severe may be the conflict. This is my opinion as a general. As to the

condition of the army and its fitness for a battle, I cannot speak until I have seen it, and know the reasons for the field-marshal's judgment. On the political situation I need not hazard my ideas, neither would your majesty probably care to possess them; this only would I say, if Austria's honour is engaged I would refuse to yield; a lost battle even is less hurtful than to retreat without having drawn the sword."

The general ceased speaking, and for a few moments silence prevailed in the cabinet.

"Gentlemen," said the emperor, "the questions before me are of so difficult a nature, that they require careful investigation and calm reflection. In an hour I will decide; and I will give to you, Count Crenneville, the answer to the field-marshal, and at the same time you, Count Mensdorff, shall receive a reply to the question you have brought before me."

The two gentlemen bowed.

"Shall the motion be made immediately to the Confederation for the mobilization of the armies of the un-Prussianized States, as your majesty has desired?" inquired Count Mensdorff.

"Certainly," cried the emperor, "it is necessary that the German States should own to their colours, and that the armies of the Confederation should be placed in the field. I am of the opinion of Baron Gablenz that on this our safety greatly depends."

With a friendly nod he dismissed the gentlemen; then approaching General von Gablenz he took his hand, and said, "God be with you! may He bless your sword, and give me fresh cause to be grateful to you."

Gablenz bent over the emperor's hand, and said with emotion, "My blood, my life, belong to you and Austria!"

The emperor remained alone. Several times he hastily

paced his cabinet ; then he seated himself at his writing-table, and turned over some papers quickly, without looking at their contents.

“ What a frightful position ! ” he exclaimed ; “ every feeling of my heart urges me to act against this German calamity, which like a wasting sickness, like a gnawing worm, eats into the heart of Austria, and devours her power and her greatness. My hereditary blood urges me to pick up the glove, half scornfully, half threateningly thrown down so long ago by the dangerous, deadly enemy of my race. The voice of the German people calls me—and my minister counsels retreat, my general hesitates at the moment of decision ! Can the thought be true which like a black mountain has oppressed my heart in my dark hours ? Am I predestined to bring misfortune on my beloved, beautiful Austria, the glorious inheritance of my great ancestors ? Will my name be linked in history with the setting of the Hapsburg star, the fall of the empire ? ”

He gazed into space with troubled eyes.

“ Oh ! that thou couldst stand beside me, thou great Spirit, with thy strong noble heart, with thy clear intellect, and unconquerable will, to guide the rudder of the Austrian empire : thou whose calm proud strength shattered the power of the hellish giant who had dismembered the world ! oh, that I had a Metternich ! What would he counsel, that mighty mind, whom none understood, whom none can understand, because between his inner life and the world the proud words of Horace stand inscribed : ‘ Odi profanum vulgus et arceo ! ’ ”

He suddenly seized his bell. “ Let States-Chancellor Klindworth come immediately,” he commanded, as the gentleman-in-waiting entered ; “ seek him in the office of state.” The gentleman-in-waiting withdrew.

“He alone,” said the emperor, “yet survives from the times of Austria’s greatness, when the threads of all European policy were gathered together in our offices of state, when Metternich’s ear was in every cabinet, and his hand linked together the acts of every government. He, it is true, was only the tool of the great statesman, not the confidant of his thoughts—he was not Metternich, no, not Metternich, but he laboured with him in working the wonderful machine—and his quick penetrating mind seized the spirit of the whole, at least in some degree. When he speaks to me, I seem to see that old, rich, many-coloured period, and to know, as if by inspiration, what Metternich would do if he still were the friend and adviser of the house of Hapsburg. I have the will, the power to work,—the courage to fight. Why is wisdom so hard?”

The emperor leant his head on his hand, and sat in deep thought. The gentleman-in-waiting opened the door leading to the inner apartments, and announced, “States-Chancellor Klindworth awaits your majesty’s commands.” The emperor raised his head and made a sign that he should enter at once.

Through the opened door advanced this extraordinary man, who began his remarkable career as a schoolmaster in the neighbourhood of Hildesheim; he then for a short time played a public part as state-chancellor at the court of Duke Charles of Brunswick, and after the tragic fall of that prince became one of the most skilful and zealous of Metternich’s agents. He was involved in all the most important political transactions, and had had relations with every sovereign and minister in Europe; yet he so skilfully enveloped himself in obscurity, that only those most initiated in political circles had ever seen him, or spoken to him.

Klindworth was now a man of about seventy years of age, broad shouldered, and strongly built. His head, which was so pressed down between his shoulders that it seemed to lurk there in concealment, was covered with grey hair, fast turning white, and his face was of such extraordinary ugliness, that it attracted and riveted attention more than the highest order of beauty. His small eyes glittered quick and piercing beneath thick grey eyebrows, and with their keen glances, which they never directed straight at any other eyes, seized on everything worthy of remark within their range of sight.

His wide mouth, with its thin bloodless lips, was firmly closed, and quite concealed in the middle by his long thick nose, which spread out to an enormous breadth towards the lower part. He wore a long brown overcoat closely buttoned, and a white neck-cloth, and his manner was completely that of a worthy old tradesman who had retired from business. No one would have imagined him to be a most dexterous and far-travelled political agent ; the art so much practised in his political life, never to appear, but always to remain in the darkest background, he seemed to exercise in his appearance ; it would have been impossible better to have represented the image of a modest unimportant person.

He entered, bowed deeply, and approached within two or three steps of the emperor ; he then stood still with a most respectful bearing, and without uttering a word. His quick eyes examined the monarch, and were instantly sunk again to the ground.

"I have sent for you, dear Klindworth," said Francis Joseph, with a slight bend of the head, "because I am desirous of hearing your views on my present position. You know how much I like to hear how things mirror

themselves in your mind, which has lived through the experiences of a past great time."

"Your imperial majesty is too gracious," returned Herr Klindworth, in a low, but distinct and penetrating voice. "The rich treasures of experience obtained in a long political life are always at the command of my gracious monarch; as my great master Prince Metternich said—'The past is the best corrective and the truest barometer for the present.' The faults of the past are seen with all their results and consequences, and from them we may learn to avoid the blunders into which present events are leading us."

"Quite right," said the emperor, "quite right, only in the past, in *your* past, few blunders were committed; but what do you consider would be the most dangerous error which could now be made?"

Without hesitation, Klindworth replied, raising his eyes from the ground for a moment, and fixing them on the emperor:—

"Indecision, your majesty!"

The emperor looked at him with embarrassment.

"And you fear this error may be committed?" he asked.

"I fear it *has already been committed*," returned Klindworth, quietly.

"By whom?"

"Wherefore has your majesty chosen me for this high honour?" asked Klindworth, instead of replying to the question. "Your majesty shall hear my plain humble opinion, though its weight be but as a grain of sand in the balance. You have *yourself* not decided," and he assumed a more humble and modest manner than before.

The emperor smiled. "You know how to read the thoughts of others; nothing is safe from your key. But

granting that I have not decided, this is no fault; the time for decision has only just arrived."

"Does your imperial majesty command me to speak without any reserve?" asked Klindworth.

"Assuredly," said the emperor, adding with some haughtiness of manner, "I certainly did not send for you to indulge in idle conversation."

The states-chancellor clasped his hands over his breast, and tapped the back of his left hand lightly with the fingers of his right. Then he spoke very slowly, and with long pauses, during which he watched the impression made by his words through his half-closed eyelids:

"I cannot, according to my humble views, share your imperial majesty's opinion that the moment for decision has only just come."

The emperor gazed at him with surprise.

"According to your views, when was that moment?" he asked.

"It was," returned Klindworth, "before Prussia and Italy had concluded a treaty; before Italy was armed; and before Prussia had completed her preparations. Your majesty wished to decide the great German quarrel; your majesty wished to set up the imperial throne in Frankfort after Count Rechberg had, somewhat prematurely, roasted the *bœuf historique*."

The emperor frowned, but without altering his tone Klindworth continued,—

"Your majesty unveiled your designs too soon, and therefore the best moment was lost; a blow should fall heavily, and the opponent be unprepared. A long exchange of despatches reminds me of the Trojan heroes, who made long speeches and related their genealogy before hurling their spears. A dispute, an ultimatum, and your majesty's army in Saxony at once! so should I

have conceived the affair. Now the Saxon army approaches Bohemia; it is impossible to fight except in Bohemia, that is to say, the burden of war is brought into our own territory. That, your imperial majesty, I call indecision; we feel its evil consequences already, and they will increase every day."

"Do you not think," said the emperor, thoughtfully, "that Prussia dreads war, and will give way rather than appeal to arms?"

"No, your majesty, that will not happen; Count Bismarck is incapable of such a course."

"But the king," said the emperor, "he is against the war. They speak of a difference with Bismarck quite recently."

"I do not believe it, your majesty," said Klindworth, "though I own my personal judgment fails me where the King of Prussia is concerned. I knew Frederick William IV.," he continued, "I knew the Emperor Nicholas, and I know the Emperor Napoleon. Of the deceased monarchs I could, of the Emperor Napoleon I can, foretell (through the knowledge of human nature I possess) their probable course of action, but as to King William," and a slight tone of injury and dissatisfaction was heard in his voice, "I never could get any nearer to what he would do. I have only the ground of conjecture to go upon where he is concerned."

"And what do you conjecture?" asked Francis Joseph.

"I conjecture that the king will not give way, but that he will fight. He is no longer young, therefore he dreads war, with its misery and distress: he is a Hohenzollern, and all Hohenzollerns have a certain traditional deference for the house of Hapsburg, therefore he especially dreads a war with Austria. But he is a man, a character, and a soldier, therefore he will rather wage

war than yield, and make his military organization, which he has perfected after such a severe struggle, the laughing-stock of the world. King William will fight your majesty; threats will not alarm him, therefore to threaten was to blunder, and indecision bears its evil fruit."

"Since, however, the fault of indecision is committed," asked the emperor, "how can we make it good? No statesman can always avoid an error, the great art is to amend it. What can help us now?"

"Quicker decision, and quickest action!" returned Klindworth.

"But you do not know," said the emperor, hesitatingly, "Count Mensdorff——"

"I know all that," returned Klindworth, smiling; "Count Mensdorff is ill, and to sick folks decision is hard."

"How would Metternich, the man of prudence, and of happy combinations, have decided?" asked the emperor, softly, speaking half to himself, half to his companion.

"Metternich would probably never have been in this position, but if he now sat in the state council your majesty's troops would be in Dresden and Hanover."

"But Benedek——" said the emperor.

"Benedek, your majesty, finds himself for the first time in a position of great responsibility, without having yet acted; this depresses him."

"But he says the army is unfit to fight," said the emperor, most unwillingly.

"It will certainly never improve by lying still in Bohemia; if your majesty fights with it, it will become fit to fight," returned Klindworth, positively.

The emperor paced up and down the room; the states-

chancellor stood perfectly still, but his grey eyes watched every movement of the emperor, who stopped suddenly before him, and asked,—

“Are you aware of the French proposal?”

“An alliance, provided you yield Venetia,” said Klindworth.

“What do you think of it?”

“I think it revolts every feeling of your majesty’s heart—and with justice.”

“It is not a question of inclination, or disinclination, but of policy,” said the emperor.

“Policy is entirely against such an alliance,” said Klindworth.

“Why? Count Mensdorff gave me reasons in its favour, which I must own made a powerful impression upon me.”

Klindworth’s eyes sparkled, and he raised his bent figure somewhat, whilst the movement of his fingers grew quicker, and his voice became more animated, and louder than before.

“All political reasons, your majesty, speak against this alliance, and on these grounds: perhaps, I grant it, opposed to this coalition, Prussia may give way—*perhaps*, but how far? Will your majesty obtain what you desire? No! the quarrel is but patched up, and under such circumstances that Prussia must win. I do not even believe that they will yield in Berlin. I believe that they will fight, though opposed to the French alliance—and then what occurs? If your majesty conquers, the reward of victory will not be yours. Do you believe the Emperor Napoleon will permit the sole supremacy of Austria over a united Germany? To obtain the fruits of victory you would be forced to commence a fresh war against your former ally, who would join hands with your conquered

rival. The benefit of an alliance with France is also doubtful, since France is not in a position for any military undertaking."

"Is that certain?" asked the emperor, with surprise.

"Your majesty is aware that I am careful in making distinct assertions, and that I possess means of information which may always be relied on. At this moment France cannot place 100,000 men in the field."

The emperor was silent.

"If, however, the benefits of this alliance are doubtful and insecure," said Klindworth, "two great and certain evils must result from it."

The emperor looked at him expectantly.

"In the first place, your majesty, the position of the house of Hapsburg and of Austria in Germany would be deeply compromised by a French alliance. Should your majesty obtain success, half success at the best, public opinion would always regard Prussia as a national martyr, sacrificed to the hereditary enemy of the German nation. This would give Prussia great additional strength, and it would be a fair ground upon which to renew the struggle under more favourable circumstances."

"Opinion in Germany is on my side," said the emperor.

"Partly," returned Klindworth, "but it is not on the side of France. Your majesty, I do not belong to those politicians who are always praising up a beloved nationality—for Austria it is highly dangerous—and I belong to the time when the balance of power was maintained by a skilful combination of great and small states; when a bundle of wands cleverly bound together was considered stronger than a clumsy cudgel; yet it is dangerous to slap national feeling in the face, especially now, and henceforth, as it has been raised to fever-heat by 'the great German union,' and similar demagogical

watchwords, to which governments always fall dupes. All the South Germans and Bavarians, who are now so full of zeal that they speak, write, and act against Prussia, would, I believe, straightway go over to the enemy's camp, if they heard of an alliance with France. I know what the 'furor Teutonicus' is, your majesty: we used to repress it; now everything is done to kindle it, and if a French alliance is concluded at the present moment, Germany will belong to Prussia."

The emperor listened attentively; his own views appeared to coincide with those of his states-chancellor, and a slight smile played round his lips. This did not escape the quick eyes of Herr Klindworth.

"Besides," he continued, "I consider this alliance prejudicial in the highest degree, on account of the sacrifice which must purchase it."

"Do you consider the possession of Venice so important?" asked the emperor with interest.

"The possession of Venice, in itself, I do not regard as important," said Klindworth, "but a great principle is involved, which I hold to be of the highest importance. If of your own free will you barter Venice for a treaty, your majesty solemnly recognizes all that has been done in Italy against the house of Hapsburg, against legitimacy, and against the church; and not this alone, but also what is about to be done against those pillars on which the strength and power of Austria rest, I mean the robbery of the Patrimony of St. Peter, and the secularizing of the Holy Roman See. It would be the abdication of Austria."

"My own feeling tells me the same," exclaimed the emperor. "But do you believe that if I conquer, I shall be able to check the course of events in Italy; that I shall be able to win back what has been lost?"

"I do believe it," replied Klindworth, firmly.

The emperor was startled by this positive answer.

"If I were the victor in Germany, would Germany make a pilgrimage to Rome?" asked he. "I doubt it."

"That would not be needful," returned Klindworth; "we have often heard 'Italia farà da sè,' well, let us leave the Italians to act:" and he rubbed his hands together with a low laugh.

"What can Italy do?" said the emperor urgently, "do you know anything?"

"It is a little *mon métier* to know everything," returned Klindworth. "Your majesty must permit me to make a few short remarks. Italy fell under the house of Savoy and the demagogues, because Austria was beaten at Solferino."

"Not by Italy!" cried the emperor.

"Not by Italy, it is true," continued Klindworth; "but it was beaten, and the revolution was all powerful, the defenders of right lost heart, and above all were dis-united. Since that time much has occurred, much has been learned from the foe; a strong, invisible bond now unites all those who serve and are willing to fight for the right, and the apostolic blessing rests upon this bond. What the Carbonari did for the revolution, the Carbonari of right will again effect: but as the former were assisted by victory from without, so do the latter wait until the sword of Austria shall have effected the first breach in the fortress of crime and wrong. Let there be one Austrian victory over the troops of this crowned revolution, and Italy will be in flames, and the crusade against Cavour's work will begin—and conquer."

The emperor listened with the greatest excitement: he stepped close up to Klindworth, who maintained his calm demeanour.

"Do you speak from dreams of your own imagination," cried Francis Joseph, "or from facts?"

"From facts, your majesty, which I can prove."

"When? where?" cried the emperor.

"In five minutes; here, in your majesty's cabinet."

"Then bring your proofs."

"I must then beg your majesty to admit a person, who, foreseeing to what the present conversation would lead, I took the liberty of bringing with me, and who waits below."

The emperor looked amazed.

"Who is this person?" he asked.

"The Count di Rivero, your majesty."

The emperor seemed to search through his memory for the name.

"Who is he?" said he, after a pause; "ah! I remember: was not a Roman Count Rivero introduced at court, some years ago, by the Nuncio?"

"You are right, your majesty," said Klindworth, "he is a Roman, and the Nuncio was his sponsor. But with the Count Rivero, known in the brilliant salons of the court, I have nothing to do. My Count Rivero is an unwearied champion of Right and of the Church, preparing in quiet obscurity the great insurrection which will destroy the work of Wrong—a mighty leader of all those elements, which, bound together by unseen threads, are preparing for the common struggle."

"How does he prove his identity?" asked the emperor, in a voice in which curiosity struggled with distrust.

Klindworth drew from his pocket a sealed letter, and handed it to the emperor:

"In case your majesty should incline to see him, he has entrusted me with this."

The emperor seized the letter.

"From the Farnese Palace, from my sister-in-law," he cried, breaking open the seal, and reading the short contents.

"Bring the count in at once," he then said.

Bowing deeply Klindworth withdrew.

"How fortunate that I sent for this man! what new views he opens out to me!" cried the emperor. "Is it possible that the former greatness of my house will again arise on every side?"

He walked thoughtfully to the window, and looked up at the sky, slowly following with his eyes the movements of the clouds.

After a short time Herr Klindworth was announced, and at a sign from the emperor, again admitted. He was followed by Count Rivero, whose manner was as perfect and as calm as when he entered Madame Balzer's boudoir, and as when he stood opposite Herr von Stielow's pistol.

His dress was black, of faultless simplicity and perfect cut. With the firm light step, and complete self-possession, which proved him acquainted with courts, he advanced towards the emperor, and, bowing deeply, waited, with his eyes calmly fixed on the monarch, for him to speak.

The emperor looked searchingly at him, and said:

"I remember you, count, at court in former years."

"It is very gracious of your majesty to recollect me," said the count, in his soft, melodious voice.

"You come from Rome?"

"From the Farnese Palace, your majesty."

"And what brings you here?"

"The wish to offer your majesty my services in the great struggle now before Austria."

"My sister-in-law of Naples commends you to me as a man worthy of my fullest confidence."

"I believe I have deserved her confidence, and I hope to earn that of your majesty," returned the count, bowing quietly, and speaking without any presumption.

"And how do you think you can be of use to me?" asked the emperor.

The count returned his scrutinizing gaze openly and proudly, saying:

"I offer your majesty the support of a great and invisible power, the Holy League of Right and of Religion!"

"Explain to me what this League is, and what it can do."

"I will tell your majesty how it arose; you will then understand what it is, and what it can do. After those great battles in which the Austrian armies in Italy were crushed, the flood of revolution, urged on by the ambitious house of Savoy, spread all over Italy, placing firmly on the head of Victor Emanuel the crown created by red republicanism; whilst all who had in their hearts a love of right and religion, and a desire to fight for Holy Church, were surprised and dispersed—incapable of united and energetic resistance. The work of wickedness was accomplished in hot haste, and even the Emperor Napoleon, who had thought out a very different Italy, could not check the evil spirits he had himself unchained. After fever came exhaustion. Even in the Vatican there was no safety. But exhaustion was followed by reaction. In Rome, in the palace of King Francis, that single-minded but in his simplicity truly great and royal hero (who, with the cannon of Gaëta, had made his protest against sinful Wrong resound through Europe), the men first assembled, who said, 'Wrong conquered because a few wicked men willed it so, and worked together with united strength; why then should Right not again arise, for God is on our side, if men of

courage and decision combine in the common work, assembling weaker spirits and filling them with zeal and activity ?” This proposal was followed by decision, and decision by action. King Francis drew up the plan and the way to carry it out ; and your majesty’s heroic royal sister-in-law fanned the pure flame of good and noble resolutions into a bright blaze of burning enthusiasm. Throughout Italy committees were formed, and men and women of well-known opinions joined the League, whose numbers could soon be counted by thousands. Men devoted to the king work at all the European courts ; the talented, accomplished, and prudent Canofari remains in Paris, Count Citto travels through Europe ; we are well informed of all that takes place ; Golotti organizes Naples and Sicily. The influence which the members of the League have over the masses is great ; arms and ammunition lie in places of safety, and we stand at the head of a power, to which we have but to apply the electric spark, and Italy will be in flames, from the Alps to the further point of Sicily. Does your majesty desire further information upon the extent, the organization, and the power of the League ?”

“ Not at this moment,” said the emperor, with some excitement ; “ at a future time I shall beg for these particulars, as they interest me greatly. In what relation does the Holy See stand to your cause ?” he then asked.

“ The Holy Father, your imperial majesty, is the high priest of the church,” replied Count Rivero. “ His weapons are spiritual, and he can take no direct part in a work carried on by secular means ; but this work can only be well-pleasing to him, and the apostolic blessing must rest on those who labour to restore both spiritual and temporal right. All faithful priests support the League in every way permitted by their holy office.”

"And how does this League intend to act; what does it hope to obtain?" asked the emperor.

"Your majesty," returned the count, "we await the breaking out of the great war for the re-establishment of Austria's former power and greatness. Whatever may be the result on the northern side, success is certain for Austria in Italy. We can undertake nothing alone, for we are unable to oppose well-organized armies. As soon as these armies are engaged, and held fast by the Austrian forces, we shall give the signal; and behind the crumbling armies of Victor Emanuel, Italy will arise; the free troops of Right and of the Church will appear everywhere, to cast out the Sardinian rule, and to bring back to their inheritance their lawful princes. Your majesty only desires to rule Lombardy, and that will again belong to you."

"And Napoleon?" asked the emperor.

"I have reason to think he will not dislike to see the Sardinian government overthrown by Italy; he trembles at his own work—besides his intervention will come too late."

"And you believe," said the emperor, "that Italy herself will restore Lombardy to my house?"

"Yes, your majesty," replied the count, "under conditions."

"Ah! conditions!" exclaimed the emperor.

"Your majesty," said the count, "all we who take part in this great work are Italians, and we desire to see Italy free and happy. We wish to regard the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom in the north of our peninsula as blood of our blood, and flesh of our flesh; we are therefore willing to restore Lombardy into the hands of your majesty and to the house of Hapsburg, but not to Austria."

"How will you make the distinction?" asked the emperor, with a shade of annoyance.

"I believe," replied the count, "this distinction is the greatest proof we could give of the reverence in which we hold your imperial majesty. It would not become me," he continued, "nor am I called upon, to give your majesty any views upon the government of those states which form the Austrian empire; I must, however, remark, that according to my perceptions—and I think I have history on my side—throughout the whole of Austria there is but one common bond of union, the emperor and the army."

The emperor bowed a somewhat reluctant assent.

"The truth of this, so far as Italy is concerned, is incontestable," continued the count. "No one in Lombardy and Venice, nor indeed, throughout the whole country, has the smallest objection to the rule of the house of Hapsburg; but what hurt the national feeling, what alienated the well disposed, was the German rule, which we were made to feel in your majesty's Italian states: the rule was a foreign one, and it felt to the people like a foreign occupation. If your majesty will permit your Italian subjects to be Italian, all repugnance will vanish."

The emperor was silent, appearing not entirely to understand.

"Allow me, your majesty," said the count, "to disclose to you the picture, which stands in dazzling clearness before my mental gaze. When my poor country fell under the hellish power which now oppresses it, I thought out for it a united organization, somewhat similar to the great confederation which unites Germany. In the south the kingdom of the two Sicilies, in the heart the patrimony of St. Peter, and in the north, up to its natural boundaries, rescued Sardinia, the smaller dukedoms and

the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom. At the head of this confederation, for the developing of institutions for trade and commerce and for the welfare and cultivation of these states, bound together by a common spirit of nationality, stands the Holy Father, the head of Christendom, your imperial majesty occupying the place of his powerful earthly protector; and if the arms of Austria conquer in Germany, as I pray they may, we shall behold the Roman emperor, from Sicily to the northern sea, the honoured and beloved protector of right, and the umpire of Europe."

The count bowed, and was silent. He had latterly spoken with more excitement, and his sparkling eyes seemed to see, in dazzling completeness, the picture he had just sketched out for the emperor.

Francis Joseph had listened with kindling eyes; and Klindworth had stolen quick glances, now at the emperor now at the count, whilst he stood perfectly still without appearing to take any interest in the conversation.

"What you have disclosed to me, my dear Count Rivero, interests me in the highest degree," said the emperor, "and I rejoice that your communications have been made at the present moment. Your plans coincide with the wishes I must always bear in my heart, as the heir of my ancestors and the head of my house."

"Your majesty graciously consents," asked the count, "to accept our services, and to grant us your protection?"

"I do," said the emperor.

The count hesitated a moment, then fixed his clear eyes on the emperor.

"And the home government of your majesty's Italian states?"

"I pledge my word," said the emperor.

The count bowed.

"And you, my dear count, what rôle shall you play in the great drama?"

"I shall remain here for the present to watch the course of events, in order to give the signal at the right moment. I am at your majesty's disposal."

"Your information has been of great service to me," said the emperor, "and," turning to Klindworth, "you have perhaps saved me from a dangerous error. I believe, my dear states-chancellor, that indecision is over. And now," he cried, with animation, "let us set to work with all our might. I feel courage and strength, and I trust the old proverb may again prove true: '*Austria est imperatura orbi universo*'"

"*Ad majorem Dei gloriam!*"' added the count in a low voice.

The emperor bent his head, and called out to the count just as, retiring with Klindworth, he had reached the door:

"Auf Wiedersehen!"¹

He then seated himself at his writing-table and hastily wrote two notes, sealing them with his ring; then summoning the gentleman-in-waiting, he desired him to call his equerry.

Prince Liechtenstein entered.

"My dear prince," said the emperor cheerfully, "let these two notes be given at once to Crenneville and Mensdorff."

The prince took the notes, and left the room in silence.

"Now," cried the emperor, as he stood up and raised his sparkling eyes, "indecision is past. God protect Austria!"

¹ We shall meet again.



CHAPTER IX.

HELENA.

THE sun shone cheerfully one afternoon upon the quiet Pfarrhaus at Blechow. The roses bloomed gaily in the box-edged beds of the well-cultivated garden, where the masses of luxuriant white blossom were beginning to turn to fruit.

The doors of the large entrance-hall stood wide open, and its floor was covered with sand, scattered over with short fir branches.

In the principal dwelling-room of the Pfarrhaus, where the simple arrangements proved the excellent taste which prevailed, and where the snowy window-curtains bore witness to the cleanliness and order of the household, there sat, around the coffee-table covered with a cloth of dazzling whiteness, the Pastor Berger, his daughter, and the candidate, Behrmann.

Helena Berger was busily preparing the brown beverage of the Levant, the fragrant aroma of which filled the room, in a pretty white china apparatus; and no lady, in a drawing-room of the highest fashion, could have performed all the complicated little arrangements with greater natural grace.

Pastor Berger sat opposite to her, in his large, com-

fortable arm-chair, dressed as usual in clerical black, which according to the good old custom he never laid aside for less professional clothes, even in his own home. The only indulgence he allowed himself was the small black velvet cap which he wore on his head, considering it the sign of household comfort.

The young candidate sat between them ; he too was dressed in black, with a white neck-tie, but the cut of his clothes was different, and although the colouring was the same, the general effect of his dress was quite unlike his uncle's.

The pastor leant back comfortably in the depths of his arm-chair, his hands folded one over the other, whilst he spoke, as was frequently the case since his last visit to Hanover, of his interview with the king.

"There is," he said in a voice of emotion, "something glorious about the Lord's Anointed. He can give happiness with a word, and how willing is our own king to do so ! He does not regard his subjects simply in the light of tax-payers ; to him they are fellow-creatures, with feelings and with beating hearts, and wherever his royal heart meets with a fellow man, he is ready with human sympathy to join in his sorrow or his joy. How different it is in a Republic !" he continued ; "there the law reigns, the dead letter, a cold majority, a chance. And in a great monarchy the sovereign stands on an unapproachable, solitary height ; but here, in our beautiful, fertile, quiet Hanover, we know our king (though he from his eminence can take in everything with his clear gaze,) feels for us each individually, with his human heart."

Helena had finished preparing the coffee, and she brought her father his large cup, with the inscription, "dem lieben Vater," traced in wreaths of roses.

The old gentleman took a small sip, and his counte-

nance assumed an expression of great satisfaction at the result of his daughter's skill.

"I must beg for a little water in my cup," said the candidate in a quiet persuasive voice, "I cannot take strong coffee."

"Just like the present generation! how fond they are of water!" cried the pastor testily: "coffee must be strong if it is to rejoice your heart and to do you good. Water is certainly a good gift of God, but it has its proper place; now they pour it even into noble wine; and this is why we hear so many watery words. I hope, my dear Hermann, your sermon next Sunday will not be diluted with water, for our peasants here are accustomed to the strong unembellished Word, which, as our great Reformer said, 'should resound to the alarm of the hypocrite, and the joy of the righteous.'"

Helena had in the meantime prepared her father's large meerschaum pipe, cutting up the rolled tobacco with which she filled it on a metal plate, and bringing it to him with a lighted match.

"Of course you do not dream of smoking the time-honoured pipe?" said the pastor to his nephew, looking with great content at his own well-coloured bowl, the companion of several years, and watching the first clouds of smoke as they rose in the air, "but there are some excellent cigars, which the president brought from Hamburg."

"Thank you," said the candidate, declining, "I do not smoke at all."

"Not at all?" cried the astonished pastor; "really that surpasses the water! Well," he continued rather severely, "every time has its own customs, and I don't think they improve. Have you yet received your appointment as adjunct?" he asked.

"No," replied the candidate, "they promised to send it after me as soon as possible. I did not wish to wait for it, as I was desirous of at once entering on the scene of my future labours, and also of being admitted without delay into the family of my beloved relations."

His eyes sought the pastor's daughter, who had seated herself at a little table in the window, where she occupied herself with some white needlework.

"I did not think that the gentlemen of the Consistorial Council were particularly pleased at his majesty's cabinet decree, appointing me adjunct here, with a view to my ultimately succeeding to the pastor's office."

"I can well believe it," returned his uncle; "authorities like to rule without feeling a higher power, especially when those below must hear of the interference. It disturbs the *nimbus*. Can they make any objection to your qualification?" he enquired.

"Not the least," replied the candidate. "That were hardly possible," he continued with a satisfied smile, "my testimonials are of the highest order."

"Well then, these gentlemen had better calm themselves, and not begrudge to his majesty the right of making a faithful old servant happy, since no injustice is done, and no one is passed over. Would to God that these heavy times were safely gone, and the storm-cloud of war dispersed; how much blood it will cost, if the strife once begins!"

Helena let her work fall into her lap, and sat gazing through the open window, across the blooming roses, at the smiling landscape beyond.

A hasty step approached the house, and a knock was heard at the sitting-room door. "Come in," cried the pastor, and a young, poorly-dressed girl entered.

"Well, Margaret, what brings you here?" asked the pastor in a friendly voice.

"Oh! Herr Pastor," sobbed the little girl, whilst large tears ran down her cheeks, "father is so very ill, and he says he is afraid he shall die, and he wants so much to see you, Herr Pastor, to get a little comfort, and oh, dear! what will become of us if he does die?"—loud sobs stifled the poor child's voice.

The pastor stood up and laid his pipe down in his arm-chair.

"What is the matter with your father?" he asked.

"He got very hot, working, yesterday," replied the child, interrupted by her tears, "and then he took cold, and it brought back his cough last night so bad; and he is so ill, and he says he shall die!"

"Take comfort, my child," said the pastor, "it will not be so bad as that. I will come and see what must be done." And opening a large oaken chest, he took from it a case containing several small bottles, stuck it in his pocket, and seized his clerical hat.

"One had need to be something of a doctor, here in the country," he said to his nephew, "that the right means may be used, until further help can be procured, when it is really necessary. I believe I have saved a good many lives with my little medicine chest," he added, with a happy smile.

"Poor papa!" said Helena, "your fresh pipe?"

"Do you not think the poor sick man will be more refreshed when he sees me, than I should be by a few puffs of tobacco?" said her father gravely.

"But, my dear uncle, can I not undertake this for you?" asked the candidate. "I am so anxious to make myself acquainted at once with the duties of my sacred office."

"No, my dear nephew," replied the pastor; "let us do all things in order. You are not even appointed here yet; and then you must learn to know your people before you can undertake these visits; the sight of a stranger only excites a sick person. Wait quietly here—I will return shortly." And he left the house with the child, who ceased crying when she found the pastor was going to see her father.

The candidate walked to the window; his eyes first rested on Helena, who sat bending over the work she had again taken up, then they strayed through the window, beyond the rose beds, to the wood-crowned horizon.

"It is really pretty here," he said, "and in summer it is pleasant to reside here."

"Oh yes, it is lovely," interrupted the young girl, in that tone of complete conviction and natural enthusiasm with which young hearts regard the place where they have passed a happy childhood, feeling certain that it must be the most charming and delightful spot in the world; "you will think it still more beautiful when you know all the glorious country around us, and all our pretty, quiet walks, even the monotonous fir woods have their charm, and their language"—and her eyes sought the dark green forests enclosing the sunny landscape as in a frame.

A slight smile, half compassionate, half ironical, played round the lips of the candidate.

"I really wonder," he said, "how my uncle, with his well-stored mind, so plainly appearing in his conversation, and still extolled by the friends of his youth, should have been able to exist here all these years, so far removed from all intellectual life, and from all intercourse with the progress of the world. He is considered one of the first pastors in the country, his duties, it is well

known, have been performed in an exemplary manner, and with his reputation for learning, and the influence he possesses, he might long ago have held a seat in the Consistory. To such a man, this would have been the starting-point for a great, an important career ! I cannot imagine how he has endured life among these peasants !”

Helena looked with her great eyes at her cousin in amazement. His words struck an element quite unknown to her life.

“How little you know my father,” she said ; “he loves his beautiful quiet home, and the peaceful, happy scene of his work, far better than dignities with their restraints and cares.”

“But the higher and the more influential the position,” said the candidate, “the greater the scope for work, and the richer the blessing that zealous labour may obtain.”

“It may be so,” returned the young girl, “but the fruit is not so plainly seen, intercourse with the people is so much less intimate, and my father has often told me that his highest pleasure is to pour comfort and peace into a troubled soul, and his highest pride to bring back an erring heart to God. But you intend to remain here yourself, cousin,” she added with a smile, “and to bury yourself in this solitude ?”

“I have to commence my career,” he replied, “I must work to rise, and youth is the time for toil ; but as the aim of my life, I shall certainly place a much higher object before me.” His eye scanned the far distance as if he were looking for some aim, very different to anything which the quiet landscape around had to show.

“And you, Helena,” he asked after a moment’s pause, “have you never felt the need of a higher intellectual life, the longing for a more extensive world ?”

"No," she replied simply; "such a world would only depress and alarm me. When we were lately in Hanover it seemed as if all my blood rushed back to my heart, I could scarcely understand what was said to me, and I felt so dreadfully lonely. Here I know everything around me, the people and the country; here life feels so rich and so warm, but in a large town it felt cold and narrow. I should be very unhappy if my father were going away from here; but there is no idea of such a thing," she said in a tone of certainty.

The candidate sighed slightly as he gazed straight before him.

"But in winter," he said, "when you cannot be out of doors, and when nature has no charms, you must be very dull and lonely."

"Oh, no!" she cried cheerfully, "never. We are never dull here, you cannot think how pleasantly we pass the long winter evenings. My father reads to me, and tells me about so many things, and I play and sing to him. He is so happy after his day's work."

Again the candidate sighed.

"Besides," she continued, "we are not quite without society. There is the family of our president von Wendenstein at the castle, and we make up quite a large party. We are not so much out of the world as you imagine. Last winter we very often danced at the castle."

"Danced!" exclaimed the candidate, as he folded his hands over his breast.

"Yes," said Helena; "the company staying at Lüchow often came over, and we had quite as much fun as they could have had in Hanover."

"But my uncle, did he not object to your participating in such extremely worldly amusements?" asked the candidate.

"Not in the least," she replied; "why should he?"

The candidate seemed to have an answer ready, but to repress it; and, after a short pause, he said in a gentle tone of superiority,—

"The opinion becomes more and more confirmed in all well-regulated circles, that such amusements are quite inadmissible in a clergyman's family."

"Indeed! what an excellent thing it is that we are quite out of the way of those well-regulated circles," said Helena coldly, for she felt displeased at her father's judgment being condemned, and her own amusements disapproved.

The candidate was silent.

"Of what does the family at the castle consist?" he asked after a pause; "I must go there and be introduced as soon as possible."

"Besides Herr von Wendenstein, his wife and daughters, there is the Auditor von Bergfeld," replied Helena.

"Has he been here long?" asked the candidate quickly, casting a searching look at his cousin.

"A year," she replied, with perfect indifference, "and he will soon leave, for a young auditor is always employed here."

"But Herr von Wendenstein has sons?" he asked.

"They are no longer at home," she replied; "one has a government appointment in Hanover, the other is an officer at Lüchow. Here comes my father!" she exclaimed, and pointed out a pathway leading from the high road, at the farther end of which the pastor had just appeared.

"I will make him a fresh cup of coffee. But good heavens!" she exclaimed, whilst a deep blush spread all over her face.

The candidate followed the direction of her eyes, and

saw a horseman trotting quickly along the high road in the blue uniform of a dragoon. He must have called out to the pastor, for he stood still; he then turned round and walked back to the road, and held out his hand to the officer, who had reined in his horse.

After a short conversation, the officer rode on, waving his hand to Helena, whom he had seen at the window. She returned his greeting by bending her head.

"Who is that?" asked the candidate.

"Lieutenant von Wendenstein," she replied, and left the window to light the spirit-lamp upon the table, and to prepare afresh the coffee, which her father had before been prevented from drinking.

The candidate watched all her movements with a scrutinizing look.

After a few minutes the pastor entered the room.

"Thank God," he said, "it was nothing dangerous. A severe cold, with a good deal of fever; but it is a peculiarity amongst the people here, who, from their simple lives and strong constitutions, know little of sickness, that they believe every illness must prove fatal."

He exchanged his hat for his little cap, and seated himself in his arm-chair, his face wearing an unusually grave expression.

"The lieutenant has just returned," he said.

"I saw him just now," remarked Helena, as she handed her father a fresh cup of coffee. "What brings him at so unusual a time—generally he comes only on Sundays?"

"Things look very bad," said the pastor. "War appears inevitable, and for the present no more leave will be given; the lieutenant therefore has ridden over this afternoon to bid them good-bye at home. He begged

that we would walk over there soon—he will leave early, as he must return to-night.”

Helena’s hand trembled as she again prepared her father’s pipe.

“My heart aches,” he continued, “for our good friend von Wendenstein and his gentle, loving wife. This fearful war may rob them of their son in the very flower of his youth.”

He took his pipe dreamily from his daughter’s hand, whilst, bending over him, she offered him a light. She then hastened to the door.

“Where are you going, my child?”

“Before we walk to the castle,” she replied, with an unusual vibration in her voice, “I must see about several things in the house.” Without looking round, she left the room.

The candidate gazed after her rather inquisitively; he then seated himself by the pastor, and said, after folding his hands together,—

“My dear uncle, from the moment of entering your house, where I hope, God willing, to be your faithful companion in your holy office, I wish to take up my position on a foundation of truth; this should be the rule of conduct for all, but especially for one who takes upon him the life of a clergyman.”

The pastor smoked his pipe, looking as if he scarcely understood what this was to lead to.

“My mother has often told me how much she desired that I should be united to you even more closely than by our present bond of relationship, and how she hoped my coming here might be the guidance of heaven, pointing out to me your daughter Helena as my true and Christian wife.”

The pastor smoked on in silence, but his expression

showed that this idea was neither new nor disagreeable to him.

"Often she has said," continued the candidate, "'How much I should rejoice if I could see you the support of my brother's old age, and if he could feel that in you he had a protector for his daughter when it should please God to call him to Himself.' Certainly," he continued, his eyes studying the expression of his uncle's face, "certainly the outward cares of life will not be hers."

"No," cried the old gentleman cheerfully, as he blew an enormous cloud from his pipe, "no, thank God! as far as that goes, I can depart in peace when my Master in heaven calls me. The small fortune I inherited from my uncle has greatly increased, for I have scarcely ever needed to spend more than the half of my income as pastor, and unless God should take away what He has given, when He calls me home my daughter need have no trouble as far as money is concerned."

"But," continued the candidate, an almost imperceptible smile of satisfaction playing around his thin lips, "'but she will still need a protecting arm, and if you could afford her this, perhaps in the very home where she has passed her childhood, how happy it would make me.' This is what my mother has often said to me."

"Yes, yes, my good sister," said the pastor, with an affectionate smile,—"fate separated us completely, not perhaps as things are now, for the borders of Brunswick may be reached in a day, but in our calling travelling is difficult!—her true heart has always kept its affection for me."

The candidate proceeded:

"My mother's wish pleased me much, but I set it aside as an open question, for according to my ideas a marriage should only take place from mutual inclination,

arising from sympathy between two hearts, and therefore it was needful we should know one another. But since I have been here, and during the few days I passed in your society in Hanover, my mother's wish has become my own. I find in Helena all those qualities which I hold most necessary to enable her to fulfil the duties of the Christian wife of a clergyman, and to render the life of her husband happy, and therefore (that everything may be clear and true between us) I ask you, my dear uncle, if you will permit me to endeavour to gain your daughter's affections, and if after a more intimate acquaintance I should succeed, whether you will be willing to trust her to me for life ? ”

The old gentleman took the pipe from his mouth, and held out his hand to his nephew.

“ You have acted well and honestly,” he said, “ in speaking to me thus, uprightly and honourably, and I will answer you in the same upright and honourable manner. What your mother,” he continued, “ thought and said, passed also through my mind, and I own that when I obtained your nomination here, I thought it would make me happy if you became mutually attached ; then when I felt my strength failing me I could resign, and still see my dear daughter ruling the loved home where she grew up, and which her gentle, affectionate mother first made so dear to me.”

The old man was silent for a few moments, and tears stood in his eyes. The candidate's features expressed extreme satisfaction.

“ With my whole heart, my dear nephew,” resumed the pastor, “ I give you leave to woo my Helena, and if you obtain her love I will joyfully give my blessing to your union, both as a father and as a priest. But do not be hasty—give her time—she is of a timid disposition,

and shrinks in alarm from everything that is new. Learn really to know one another ; you will have plenty of time."

The candidate pressed his uncle's hand.

"I thank you most heartily," he said, "for your permission, rest assured I will not try to take her heart by storm ; no sudden blazing fire beseems a Christian marriage, our hearts should feel a pure and quiet flame."

At this moment Helena returned ; she wore a light-coloured dress, and a straw hat, ornamented with some small flowers. There was a rosy tint upon her cheeks, and her eyes shone with enthusiasm, but as if through a veil of tears, yet her lips smiled.

She looked extremely beautiful ; she nodded affectionately to her father as she entered the room, but she cast down her eyes when she saw the look with which the candidate surveyed her whole appearance.

"I am ready, papa," she said.

"Quite right my child ; then we can go."

He stood up, and laid aside his cap.

"You must accompany us," he said to his nephew ;

"I will introduce you to our president."

"Should I not first call at the castle ?" asked the candidate.

"You will do so now with me," replied the pastor ; "we are not formal people here,—I answer for it you will always be welcomed by our friends."

The candidate put on his glossy, well-brushed black hat, and they all three left the parsonage.

In the old castle at Blechow, the president's family was assembled in the large garden drawing-room. Madame von Wendenstein sat on the large sofa, in her snow-white point-lace cap and flowing dark silk dress, and her daughter was preparing the tea-table at an earlier hour than usual.

The lieutenant had drawn a low arm-chair close to his mother, and was endeavouring to amuse her with lively conversation, and she sometimes replied to his remarks with a melancholy smile, though she could not prevent the tears from falling upon her white hands, as she mechanically continued her needle-work.

The president walked up and down the room in silence, pausing sometimes at the open door to gaze beyond the terrace at the landscape bathed in the warm light of the summer evening.

"Don't damp the boy's spirits," he said, standing before his wife, and speaking in a voice of forced harshness; "a soldier should always set out willingly and joyfully to a war, when a war comes, for that is his business, and he ought to rejoice at the opportunity of following his calling, and doing his duty in earnest. Besides which, nothing is yet certain," he added, partly to console his wife, partly to allay his own anxiety; "though they must be ready for anything that may occur, the tempest may still pass over."

"I will not certainly take from him his cheerful pleasure in doing his duty," said Madame von Wendenstein in a gentle voice, "but I cannot help being sad in this dark and heavy hour. We shall sit here at home alone with our thoughts and our cares, whilst he will hurry about in the open air, with the constant variety of change. He will soon recover his spirits. Is your linen all in order?" she said, turning to her son, as if she wished to diminish her sorrow by material cares for the child who was soon to encounter such dangers.

"My linen is in the most excellent order, mother," replied the lieutenant cheerfully. "But if we really march, I shall not be able to take much with me,—our baggage must be small. Where is the pastor?" he exclaimed:

"he promised me to spend the last few hours here. *Apropos*," he added, "have they visitors at the parsonage? I saw a gentleman in the dress of a clergyman, standing by Helena at the window."

"It is the nephew who is appointed adjunct here," said the president, "and to whom the pastor will in time resign. I am very glad that the king graciously granted our good Berger's request, especially as I believe the Consistory would not have appointed him. Perhaps, too, he may be a *parti* for our pretty Helena."

The lieutenant cast a quick glance at his father, and then stood up and looked silently out over the terrace.

A whispering was heard in the ante-room, and an old servant entered, and said, "Fritz Deyke wishes to speak to the lieutenant."

The young man turned round quickly, and called out, "Come in! come in! my good Fritz. What brings you here, my lad?" asked he kindly, as he walked towards the door, where young Deyke stood in a stiff attitude, holding his cap in his hand.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but I want to ask you a favour."

"Out with it then!" cried the lieutenant gaily, "it is granted beforehand."

"I hear in the village," said the young peasant, "that war is about to break out, and that the king himself will take the field. Then I must go too; and I came to beg you, sir, as you have known me from a child, to take me with you as a servant, that we might go to the wars together."

"Stop, my dear fellow," cried the officer, "we have not got so far as that, we are not to march yet, perhaps not at all; at present there is no increase of troops, for the army remains on the strength it has in time of peace,

so with the best will in the world I cannot take you. But," he continued, "if it really begins, I promise to take you, not as my servant, I have already a very quiet, respectable man; and," he added laughingly, "my old friend Deyke's son is in too good a position to be a servant."

"Not to be *your* servant, sir," said Fritz, with such pride in his voice that it was evident he thought himself quite above being servant to anyone else.

"Be easy about it," said the lieutenant, "you shall certainly come with me; at the right time I will take care to get you into my troop, then we shall always be able to talk of when we were in the dragoons together."

"You promise it, and that I shall keep near you?" asked the young peasant.

"I promise," said the lieutenant, "my hand upon it!"

He gave his hand to his former playmate with great heartiness; the latter seized it and shook it warmly, saying,—

"Then God grant, sir, we may not be parted long!"

Whilst the young peasant took leave of the officer, the servant had silently opened the door, and the pastor, accompanied by his daughter and his nephew, had entered.

The pastor introduced the candidate to Herr von Wendenstein, who shook hands with him and led him to his wife, by whom he was welcomed with a few friendly words.

Helena laid aside her hat and assisted Miss von Wendenstein in the final arrangements of the tea-table. The lieutenant joined the young ladies.

"Now, Miss Helena," he said, "I am quite in earnest, you really must give me your good wishes, for, perhaps, I shall soon have need of them. Will you not," he cried warmly, as he looked into her eyes, "will you not some-

times think of me, if we actually march, and send your good wishes after me?"

She looked at him for a moment, and then cast down her eyes, as she said in a voice that trembled slightly,—

"Certainly, I will think of you, and I will pray to God to take care of you."

He looked at her with emotion: the words were so simple, and so natural, and yet they touched for the first time something in his heart, which seemed to tell him that if he really did march as he so greatly desired to this merry war, he must leave much that he loved behind him.

"I remember very well," he said, after a moment's silence, "the dark cloud we saw the evening before my father's birthday, and how it was driven farther and farther from the light of the moon. I think of it now, that I shall not be here for a long while, perhaps, indeed, this is the last time I shall ever be at home. You see, Miss Helena," he continued, lightly and jestingly, as if he wished to conceal his feelings, "I learn from you—I have got on,—I remember your beautiful thoughts; another step, and I may have ideas of my own."

She answered neither his earnest words nor his jest, but looked up at him in silence.

"Tea is ready, dear mamma," said Miss von Wendenstein, as she gave a last scrutinizing glance at the large round table, which, contrary to custom, was brought into the drawing-room, and bore an improvised supper.

Madame von Wendenstein rose, and approached the table with the pastor, her husband and the candidate followed.

"You will sit by me, will you not?" half whispered the lieutenant to Helena, "for the sake of old times."

She did not reply, but silently took the chair next to him.

The candidate gave the young people a glance of disapproval, as he seated himself beside the young lady of the house.

The cheerful spirits that usually prevailed in the old castle at Blechow were to-day quite wanting. The conversation was forced. No one said what he thought, and no one thought what he said. The jokes, which the president sometimes attempted with an effort, fell flat, like spent rockets; and many quiet tears fell into Madame von Wendenstein's plate. The lieutenant drew out his watch.

"Time is up," he said, "will you excuse me, mother? John, my horse."

They all rose.

"Yet one request," said the lieutenant, "sing me one song before I leave, Miss Helena. You know how much I like to hear you sing, and to-day I must carry away the happiest recollection of my dear home."

A slight shiver seemed to run through the young girl's slender frame. She made a movement with her hand as if to refuse.

"I beg it," he said in a low voice.

The president opened the piano, and Helena soon sat before it, led thither by Miss von Wendenstein. The lieutenant leaned against the door opening into the garden, through which there still came the clear twilight that lasts so far into the nights of June.

Helena placed her hands upon the notes and gazed straight before her.

Then she struck a few chords, and as if compelled by some unknown impulse she began to sing Mendelssohn's beautiful melody,

"Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath,
Dass man vom Liebsten, was man hat,
Muss scheiden."

Her lovely pure voice had great richness of tone, and filled the room as with a magnetic stream. The lieutenant stepped outside into the shadow of the evening twilight, and Madame von Wendenstein rested her head in her hands, whilst her sobs became audible.

The voice of the singer grew richer and more expressive, though her face showed only blank indifference, and as she reached the conclusion a firm conviction, a holy faith rang through her song :

“ Wenn Menschen auseinander gehn,
So sagen sie : Auf Wiedersehn ! ”

There was a deep silence as she ended, so great was the impression made by the song.

The lieutenant came back from the terrace, looking very grave. He gave one long affectionate look at the young girl, who had risen from her seat and was standing near the piano, her eyes cast down, and with the same calm expressionless look on her face ; then he went up to his mother and kissed her hand.

The old lady stood up, took his head between her hands, and pressed a warm kiss upon his brow. She whispered softly, “ God protect you, my son ; ” then she gently thrust him from her, as if she wished the sorrow of leave-taking to be ended.

The president pressed his son’s hand, and said :

“ Go, if God wills it so, and let your acts be worthy of your position and your name ! Now no more adieux,” cried the old gentleman, looking with concern at his wife, who had sunk back on the sofa, and covered her face with her handkerchief. “ To horse ! we will accompany you outside.”

And he went out through the door of the entrance hall which had been opened by a servant. The pastor and the candidate followed him.

The lieutenant turned back for a moment, and embraced his sister, then he approached Helena :

" I thank you from my heart for your song," he said, and took her hand ; then half as if the last words still ran in his mind, half as if speaking to her, he added :

" Wenn Menschen auseinander gehn,
So sagen sie : Auf Wiedersehn !"

" Auf Wiedersehn ! " he repeated, raising her hand to his lips and imprinting upon it a kiss.

He then hastened after his father.

A bright red colour flew into the young girl's cheeks, and her expression grew animated and her eyes very bright, as they followed him to the door. Then she sank down on the chair before the piano, and a hot tear fell into her lap, unseen by Madame von Wendenstein, whose face was still hidden in her handkerchief, unseen by her daughter, who held her mother in a gentle embrace, and stroked her soft grey hair.

Fritz Deyke stood outside ; he had not been able to deny himself the pleasure of leading round the lieutenant's horse ; Roland pawed the ground impatiently.

The lieutenant took an affectionate leave of his father and the pastor, and gave his hand to the candidate, who received it with a bow. Had it not been for the darkness, the deadly hatred of the look he cast upon the young officer must have been observed.

Then the young man sprang lightly into the saddle.

" God grant, sir, I may soon come too ! " Fritz Deyke cried after him, as, putting his horse to a gallop, he disappeared into the gathering night.



CHAPTER X.

BERLIN.

THE streets of Berlin, though bright with sunshine, looked empty at eight o'clock on the morning of the 15th of June, 1866. Life in that city does not begin so early; and at this hour only a few of the lower orders hurried along under the lime trees, with here and there an employé or a merchant hastening to his office.

A troubled expression appeared on the face of every passer-by; acquaintances stopped and exchanged greetings and the news of the day, but the news was of an unpleasant and evil nature; the Austrian ambassador was recalled, and war was inevitable,—a war which no one desired, and which was entirely ascribed to the ambition of the minister, who, in order to retain office, was about to set Germany, nay Europe, on fire.

So thought and spoke the good people of Berlin, for they were accustomed to think and speak in the morning as Aunt Voss and Uncle Spener had caused them to read the day before; and these two long-established and highly privileged organs of public opinion daily maintained, in articles whole columns in length, that the disturbance in Germany was entirely owing to the restless ambition and

criminal rashness of this Herr von Bismarck ; and all the Müllers, all the Schultzes, all the Lehmanns, and all the Neumanns who had been brought up in the royal capital, firmly believed that nothing was needed to preserve the absolute peace of Europe under the parliamentary government, than that Herr von Bismarck should be sent about his business, either to Schönhausen, or to Kniephof, to cultivate his March Ukraïn turnips, or his Pomeranian cabbages.

But when some of the Landwehr marched past on their way to the railway stations from whence they were to be sent off to join the different army corps, a very discontented expression was seen on the faces of the Berlin children, both old and young, as they stood about in knots at the side of the streets and roundly abused that "junker Bismarck," who brought such misery on families, and cost the country so much money. This did not hinder the kind-hearted inhabitants of Berlin from bestowing on "the sacrifice to Bismarck's policy," the "Blue Laddies" of the Landwehr Guards, who were being sent to this horrid fraternal war, many abundant tokens of their affection, in the shape of beer, cigars, sausages, and spirits. And "the sacrifice" itself appeared by no means discontented ; for from its ranks resounded those merry old Prussian soldier songs, which are handed down unwritten from generation to generation, and transplanted from the bivouac to the home, where the boys learn them when they play at soldiers, and sing them later on in the bivouacs of the manoeuvres, or of the first war to which their king and country send them.

In the evening, all the Schultzes, Müllers, Lehmanns, and Neumanns went to their hereditary beer-shops, and sat round the table listening to the news from the mouth of the oracle of their different circles ; and they heard

how that very day a journalist had written, or a deputy had spoken, inculcating the great lesson that all the uneasiness, all the stagnation of trade, all the troubles of private families, were caused by one man, who sacrificed the happiness of the subject to his own mad notions and ambition ; one man, who placed the crown and the country in danger, Herr von Bismarck, the aristocratic despot !

No wonder then that all the people who were hurrying along in the early morning looked on the world with dismal eyes, nor that when acquaintances met and discussed the news, a curse, not loud but deep, should be bestowed on that Bismarck who plunged the whole world, which would have been so happy without him, into grief and woe.

Through the hurrying, busy people, and through the discontented groups walked Bismarck himself, under the lime-trees, from the Wilhelmsstrasse. He looked as calm and well satisfied in his white cuirassier's uniform, with its pale yellow collar, plain steel helmet, and major's epaulets, as if he were at the highest point of popularity. No one greeted him, but he did not care, and he walked on with a quick step, and military bearing ; he reached the corner where Friedrichsstrasse is divided by the lime-trees, opposite Kranzler's, the well-known confectioner ; there he went to a newspaper shop and bought a morning number of Aunt Voss's newspaper, a few inquisitive folks silently watching him with no friendly looks meanwhile, for every one knew the head of the ministry.

He pursued his way, hastily skimming the newspaper, until he came to the king's plain-looking square palace, opposite the colossal statue of Frederick the Great, over which the royal standard, with its purple ground and black eagles, waved in the morning wind.

The guard presented arms, and Bismarck entered the

palace, and turned to the left, on the raised ground floor, towards the king's apartments. Here he found the equerry on duty. Major the Baron von Loën greeted him, and began a conversation on indifferent subjects, until the hour of audience arrived, which the king always observed with the most conscientious punctuality.

In his large, simply-furnished work and reception room stood King William himself, with his grey hair and youthful, powerfully built figure. He had placed himself near the further window, from whence he could look down on the Platz below, as he frequently did during an audience, or while hearing a report, and through which the Berlin public often saw him during the morning hours.

King William wore the black overcoat and white buttons of the first regiment of foot guards; his fresh-coloured face with its strongly marked, benevolent features, surrounded with white hair, and a carefully kept white beard, was grave, almost melancholy, as he listened to a man, who spoke to him upon the contents of various papers in a large black portfolio.

This man, who was a head shorter than the king, was dressed in plain black, with a white neck-handkerchief. His hair, which was quite white, was brushed smoothly down on each side of his head, his face had a very animated expression, and his keen, candid eyes, sparkling with good humour and youthful fire, were fixed on the king.

It was the Privy Councillor Schneider, who was as well known as a dramatic author, manager, and actor, as he was as a military writer; he had been reader to Frederick William IV., and to William I., and for many years a faithful servant to the royal family.

"You have spoken with the king?" asked the monarch.

"I have, your majesty," replied Schneider; "on my journey home from Düsseldorf, where I had been to obtain some information for my historical work, I was obliged to stop in Hanover, and as his majesty King George has always shown me the most gracious marks of his favour, as your majesty is aware, and as I feel for him the greatest sympathy and respect, I drove to Herrenhausen, had myself announced, and requested an audience. The king received me in his own apartments, and his breakfast being just served, he graciously invited me to breakfast with him. His majesty was most kind, and I experienced afresh the truly magic charm of his manner."

"Yes," said King William, "my cousin George is of an amiable and noble nature. I often wish we had remained nearer together. It would have been better for Germany. He, alas! always feels enmity to Prussia."

"I cannot understand it," said Schneider; "personal aversion cannot possibly be the cause, for I assure your majesty, the king delights in recollections of his youth at Berlin, he feels a deep and filial veneration for his late majesty Frederick William III., and he drew from his wonderful memory numerous little traits and anecdotes of old times, of Count Neale, and old Princess Wittgenstein——"

"For whom we princes felt such immense respect," said the king laughing.

"And," continued Schneider, "I could see what pleasure the king felt in these reminiscences, and how much he was interested by my own recollections of the same times."

"And did you speak of the present political position?" asked the king.

"The conversation could not fail to touch upon that," said Schneider. "I took the liberty of expressing my

hopes that the king, from his friendly remembrance of the Berlin court, would take your majesty's side in the present sharp conflict, and that the old bond which united Hanover and Prussia in the past, might be strengthened afresh."

"And what was his majesty's reply?" asked King William anxiously.

"The king spoke most candidly and openly," replied Schneider, "displaying the chivalrous character I have always admired, when I have had the honour of any intercourse with him. He assured me he had not the smallest animosity against Prussia, though he is so often accused of it; that he considered a German war would be the greatest of misfortunes, and that from the laws of the Confederation, he should consider it an impossibility, until it actually commenced. In such wickedness and misery he would never take part."

"Why then did he not conclude a treaty of neutrality?" asked the king.

"But his Hanoverian majesty believes himself to be completely neutral," replied Schneider.

"Then I cannot understand it!" exclaimed King William; "Count Platen always denied the conclusion which I so greatly desired."

"I know nothing, your majesty, of what Count Platen did, or did not do; but of this I am certain, King George believes himself to be maintaining the most complete neutrality."

"You do not believe he has concluded a treaty with Austria?" asked the king.

"No, your majesty, I do not believe it, for the king said in the most decided way, he would take no part whatever in this unholy war. Nevertheless——"

"Nevertheless?" asked the king.

"Nevertheless his majesty said in the most clear and straightforward manner," added Schneider, "that the Prussian endeavour to alter the German Confederation of States into one Confederated State would never obtain his consent, and that he should oppose with all his power any such attempted reform of the Confederation, and should defend his own sovereignty and the complete independence of his crown."

King William shook his head.

"I ventured to remark, that I was sure no one, your majesty least of all, thought of interfering with the sovereignty of any prince, but that a stronger military union was needful for Germany, and that the most powerful state must be the leader of this offensive and defensive alliance. I added that his majesty had been brought up as an English prince, but that the policy of a small state like Hanover, could not be conducted on the principles of a first-class power, with large fleets and armies at command."

"Did not his majesty take that amiss?" asked King William.

"Not at all," returned Schneider, "he heard me with the greatest kindness, and without interrupting me; he then said, without any heat, but with the greatest firmness, 'My dear Schneider, my royal rights do not depend on the extent of my territory. I hold my crown from God, just as much as the ruler of the largest kingdom in the world, and never will I abate one tittle of my sovereign and absolute independence, be the consequence what it may!' I remarked to his majesty that it was not my business to interfere in any way with politics, but that the decided declaration he had just made was of such great importance at the present moment, that I felt it would be my duty as a true servant to my king to com-

municate it to your majesty on my return. King George fully agreed, and declared that his opinion on this subject was no secret, and that he was ready to act up to it. He then dismissed me in the most gracious and friendly manner."

"Then they are all against me!" cried King William after a moment's reflection, and with a very sorrowful expression.

He gazed from the window, and his eyes rested for some time on the statue of the Great Frederick.

"He too was alone!" he said softly, "and alone when greatest!"

His countenance became more cheerful, he glanced at his watch, then smiled at his privy councillor, and said:

"Now, my dear Schneider, puff!" He made a little movement with his mouth as if he were blowing something away and pointed to the door.

"I vanish, your majesty," cried Schneider, as with comic haste he rushed to the door; there he stood still for a moment and said, "I wish all your majesty's enemies could be as quickly dispersed by the breath of your mouth."

The king remained alone.

"I stand then on the brink of decision!" said the king thoughtfully, "and the fate of my house and of my kingdom lies at the point of the sword. Who would have thought that I, called to the throne in my old age, should yet have to undertake so great a war, and that I myself should lead the newly organized army, the work of long thought and zealous toil, which I believed I should bequeath to my son, as an instrument, as a security for future power and greatness,—that I myself should lead this army into the field, there to prove it on the same battle fields where my great ancestor inscribed his name

in such glorious characters. And yet," he added with a dreamy look, "there often came upon me a dark foreboding. When I stood before the altar at Königsberg, there to be solemnly invested with the insignia of my royal office, as I took the sword of state a feeling seized me, sudden and unexpected, as a warning, or a promise from on high. I felt compelled to use the sword against the enemies of my kingdom, who in a distant assembly were conspiring against it, and from the depths of my heart a vow arose to God, never to draw the sword without dire necessity, but once drawn, to wield it in God's name, until the enemies of my people lay beneath my feet! That foreboding is fulfilled," he whispered, "and now let us go forward, and God be with us!"

The king folded his hands together and remained silent for a time, with his head bent down.

Then he walked rapidly to his long writing-table, cheerful energy and decision beaming from his face, and with a firm hand he rang his bell.

"The minister-president, Count Bismarck," he commanded, as the gentleman-in-waiting appeared.

A few moments afterwards Bismarck entered the cabinet.

His quick penetrating grey eyes were fixed for a moment on the king. Apparently he was satisfied with the expression upon his royal master's features, for he said joyfully, as he drew some papers from his uniform:

"Your majesty, the decision draws near! I hope the dismal fog will now clear up, and disclose Prussia's brilliant armies, and that they for the future will clear the road for us after all these blocks and stoppages."

"What do you bring?" asked the king quietly. Count Bismarck hastily turned over his papers. "Herr von Werther," he said, "announces his departure from

Vienna. He also informs us that Benedek is with the army, and is dissatisfied with its condition."

"That I can well believe," said the king.

"Gablentz has also joined the army."

"I regret that this brave general is amongst our enemies!" remarked the king; "he has fought with us, and may be dangerous."

"No general alone can be dangerous to us, your majesty, material is wanting; besides they will not listen to his advice," said Bismarck confidently. "At the same time," he added, "the mobilization of the army of the Confederacy against Prussia was decreed in Frankfort yesterday. By this measure war is virtually declared, and your majesty must take immediate steps to forestall a danger which threatens our operations on our own territory. Hanover and Hesse must be rendered harmless."

"How was the measure taken in Frankfort?" asked the king; "have Hanover and Hesse declared for Austria?"

"They have not taken up the Austrian demands," replied the minister, "but they have consented to the mobilization. Always the same game of see-saw!" he added, "but it will be very dangerous to us if these states are not soon made unable to hurt us."

"They have not yet armed," said the king.

"After the decree of the Confederation they must arm; and besides, even on a peace foundation, their armies might annoy us extremely," remarked Count Bismarck. "I beg your majesty to proceed instantly with the greatest vigour, and to command a march into Hanover and Hesse without delay."

The king thought deeply.

"They refused to conclude the Treaty of Neutrality

in Hanover and in Cassel when we offered it," he said. "Now that the mobilization is decreed, of course it is no longer the question. But they have always preferred half measures, which seems to prove they would never venture seriously and decidedly to declare against us. I will ask them once more the clear and positive question, and give them the opportunity of turning back on the dangerous road they are now taking."

"But, your majesty," exclaimed Count Bismarck, "time will be lost, and time is precious!"

"Put your mind at ease, dear count," returned the king, "no time shall be lost. The time of doubt and restlessness is past. The time for action has come, for us there is no longer deliberation or a choice!"

Count Bismarck breathed freely again.

"But, pour l'acquit de ma conscience," said the king, "I will give one last and serious warning to my royal cousins, for God knows it will be hard to me to act against them. The ultimatum guaranteeing their possessions, and offering them an alliance on the foundation of our proposed reform of the Confederacy, is in the hands of the ambassadors?" he asked.

"At your majesty's command," replied the minister.

"Then give a telegraphic order immediately that the ultimatum is to be delivered, and that we will await an answer until this evening."

"The order shall go forthwith," said Count Bismarck, "but what if a refusal, or as is more probable, an evasive answer is returned?" he asked, with an anxious look at the king's face.

King William was silent for a moment, then he fixed his eyes with a look of firm resolution on his minister, and answered:

"Then the ambassadors shall declare war!"

"God save the king!" cried Count Bismarck, with a loud voice, and a look of the greatest satisfaction.

"Let the same be done in Dresden," said the king.

"In Dresden!" exclaimed Count Bismarck; "does your majesty believe that Herr von Beust——?"

"I have nothing to do with Herr von Beust," replied the king with dignity, "but I will once more offer King John my hand. If it be in vain, the guilt of what follows will not rest with me."

"But," said Count Bismarck, "may I beg your majesty immediately to command the military operations, which will be needful as soon as war has been declared."

"I will summon Moltke, and give the requisite orders," said the king.

"May I call your majesty's attention to one point?" asked Count Bismarck.

The king looked at him inquiringly.

"General von Manteuffel is coming with his troops from Holstein," said Count Bismarck; "he has permission from Hanover to march through to Minden. His advanced guard is before Harburg, and the vessels on the Elbe are placed at his disposal. Harburg is without a garrison, but it might easily be occupied from Stade, which has lately been strongly garrisoned. It appears to me highly important, at the commencement of hostilities, in case war is declared against Hanover, that we should have Harburg in our own hands, as under adverse circumstances much time might be lost there. I believe it would be very judicious if your majesty were immediately to order Manteuffel to occupy Harburg. He has a perfect right to do so, as he is permitted to be there on his march by the Hanoverian Government. If the ultimatum is accepted by Hanover, he marches quietly on; if it is rejected, he has an important point, and the railway in his hands."

The king listened attentively,—he laughed as he nodded his head.

"You are right!" said he; "what a good thing it is to have a soldier for one's minister. The orders shall be given."

"If your majesty will permit me, I will now go," said Count Bismarck, "that the measures you have commanded may be promptly carried out."

He moved away as if about to withdraw.

"What news have we from Paris?" asked the king.

Count Bismarck walked back into the room. His expression was rather gloomy.

"Benedetti is silent, your majesty, contrary to his usual custom; but Count Goltz informs us they urge action in Paris, and he is given to understand the emperor's inclination will cause him to side with Austria, if we do not soon take some decided step. I have reason to think," he added, "there is some separate treaty on foot about Venice, and at the last moment we may find they have played us some trick, so I have been informed by a reliable agent in Vienna; and Count Usedom declares he is dissatisfied with the Italians, and that he meets with a good deal that is of an equivocal nature. Nevertheless," continued the minister, "I am not much disquieted by all these intrigues, they will yield nothing in Vienna,—there they are still quite too much on the high horse. However, I have sent instructions to Florence, desiring them to be watchful and energetic, and to act in harmony with our military operations."

"But what does the Emperor Napoleon want?" asked the king.

"Always to fish in troubled waters," replied Count Bismarck, with the reckless candour peculiar to him; "but if he is now urging us to war, I don't think the fishing will

be lucky for him. I have questioned Benedetti on the secret proceedings now going on between Paris and Vienna. He declares he has been informed of nothing; but at least he can let them know in Paris that *here* we are not deaf of both ears."

"I have never thoroughly liked this Italian alliance," said the king, "though I own its great usefulness. Oh! that it might have been otherwise, and that, as in my youth, conjointly with Austria we might have turned our arms in another direction."

The minister studied the king's face with anxious eyes.

"And if it had been otherwise," he cried, with animation, "your majesty would never have been able to free Prussia, our glorious, rising country, the creation of your great ancestor, from the chains with which the envy and malice of the great European powers fettered her, by the suggestion and guidance of Austria,—this Austria who never was German, who used Germany only as a footstool for her ambition in Europe, and who was always ready to sell, to betray, to divide it. No, your majesty, I rejoice that we are forced to act, and that at last the royal eagle may spread his wings freely in the air. 'Nec soli cedit' is his motto, and he will fly to the sun, though the way be through thunder-clouds. I see before me the great and brilliant future of Prussia and of Germany, and I am proud and happy that it has been granted to me to stand beside the king, who is the creator of this future."

King William's clear gaze rested thoughtfully on the excited, enthusiastic face of his minister. His own eyes had sparkled at the words of the bold statesman who stood before him confident of victory, but he raised his looks to heaven, and said quietly and simply—

"As God wills!"

Count Bismarck looked with emotion at his royal master as he stood before him in such simple greatness, and an expression of astonishment crossed his features, as the mighty sovereign, on the eve of a fearful war, which must have so great an influence on the future, laid aside all his hopes, all his ambition, all his misgivings, in these three simple words.

"Has your majesty any further commands?" he asked, in a voice which still showed traces of his former excitement.

"No," replied the king, "hasten to send off the despatches."

And with a friendly nod he dismissed the minister-president.

Count Bismarck left the king's cabinet and the palace, and walked back quicker than he had come, to his own house in Wilhelmsstrasse, and he heeded even less than before the angry looks cast at him as he walked along under the lime trees. His face expressed proud satisfaction, and his manner joyful confidence. The great war, which his feelings and his convictions showed him to be unavoidable and necessary, was to begin, and he believed in its happy termination with a firmness and security, which excluded all doubt and hesitation.

On the ground floor of the minister's hotel, to which he was hastening back on account of the many pressing affairs awaiting him, in a plain office-like room, before a table piled with papers, sat Herr von Keudell, the Minister of Legation. He was engaged in animated conversation with a man of about six or seven and thirty, with fair hair and moustache, whose open features of the North German type possessed great mobility of expression, and whose clear grey eyes shone with good nature, humour, and talent. This man, who was dressed with

the peculiar elegance only met with in large cities, sat leaning back in a great arm-chair, which was placed near Herr von Keudell's writing table. His manner was a mixture of the bourgeois and the dandy, and he balanced his glossy hat on his knee, whilst with his hand he prevented it from falling.

"You believe then, dear Beckmann," said Herr von Keudell, "it will be possible to keep the Paris press in our favour during the war, and eventually to prevent the voice of public opinion in France from declaring for Austria?"

"Nothing easier," replied Herr Albert Beckmann, the clever and witty editor of the newspaper the "*Temps*," who for the last twenty years had lived in the journalist circles of Paris, and had acquired a perfect knowledge of all the tastes and manners of the inhabitants of the great capital of the world, without ever losing the peculiarities of his German origin. "Nothing easier. Neffzer is devoted to you; he will write you up from true conviction, otherwise we could not get him to do it. The '*Siècle*' is for you,—all liberal papers look on Prussia as progress, on Austria as reaction, and they will greet any Prussian success with joy,—they would all condemn an alliance of France with Austria as the height of folly. To obtain the voices of these papers in your favour is quite unnecessary; it will only be needful to give them the right direction, by sending them all news, diplomatic and military, quickly, and well arranged. With regard to that—*je m'en charge!*"

And he stroked his hand over the nap of his hat, twirled his small light moustache, and leant back in his chair with a satisfied air.

"But the clerical papers, '*Le Monde*,' '*L'Univers*?' " asked Keudell.

"Ah! c'est plus difficile!" replied Herr Beckmann, "these gentlemen are very Austrian, and hard to manage. In the 'Monde' the German correspondent is a cousin of mine, Doctor Onno Klopp."

"Onno Klopp is your cousin?" asked Herr von Keudell.

"Il a cet avantage," said Beckmann; "and he writes under the name of Hermann Schultze, but I must say he is very wearisome, and as he cannot write in French all his articles have to be translated, which makes them still more unpalatable to the public. Fortunately, it is enough for these papers to take one side, to make all Paris take the other."

"But have they not great influence at court?"

"Pas du tout, not the smallest," replied Herr Beckmann, confidently; "the emperor only attends to the independent papers, and never cares what the ultramontane journals say. I can assure you one article in the 'Temps' or the 'Siècle' would have more influence on him than a whole campaign in the 'Monde' or 'L'Univers.'"

"Do you not believe," suggested Keudell, "that the Austrian policy will also work upon the press, and that they will do all they can to turn public opinion in France in favour of Austria? They will not scruple as to means. Prince Metternich——"

"Ah! bah!" cried Beckmann. "Prince Metternich will do nothing; he is *trop grand seigneur* to work on the press. He has the Chevalier Debraux de Saldapenha at his side, who will write him an article in his *Mémorial Diplomatique*, very fine, very diplomatic, very elevated, and which no one will read. Enfin," he added, "true public opinion will be for you. Ollivier too—Emile Ollivier, the Roman citizen, with a longing

in his heart for the portfolio," he said, with a laugh, "is quite Prussian, and will do more with his conversation than any newspaper."

"You think the portfolio has charms for Emile Ollivier?" asked Keudell, with surprise.

"He will be minister one day," replied Herr Beckmann, confidently, "on fera cette bêtise. For the present he is the man of the opposition, and his voice is powerful. He is out and out the partizan of Prussian supremacy in Germany; that suffices. There are still," he continued, "the '*Revue hebdomadaire*;' they have as much influence as the daily papers, as they are read quietly and digested. But we are fortunate in occupying the territory beforehand. I know all the editors, and I think I can easily work upon them in your favour. You remember how favourably my pamphlet, '*Le Traité de Gastein*,' was received? I wrote it after I had had the honour of talking to the minister-president at Wiesbaden."

"Certainly," said Keudell. "I was surprised at the support we received from the French press; and we are still thankful to you for it."

"Pas de quoi," said Herr Beckmann, "I acted from conviction. I wished Count Bismarck's ideas on a newly-constituted Germany to have a favourable hearing in France, and I will still work for the same cause, because I consider his plans just and right. *Apropos*, did you know that Hansen is here?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Herr von Keudell.

"I bet he will stay some time," said Beckmann, with a quick side glance, "to watch the situation. You can work through him. What you impart to him will go to the right place, and will reach the press."

Keudell slightly bowed his head.

"Now," said Beckmann, "I think I had better go

back as fast as I can to Paris, and open the campaign."

He rose. A servant entered.

"His excellency awaits the Minister of Legation."

"I come," said Keudell. He gave Beckmann his hand, and said: "Let us soon hear of your diligence. You will pass through Hanover just in time to see the general flight."

"I am sorry Hanover is against you," said Beckmann. "It is my own country, and though I left it so long ago, I have a natural and deep regard for it. However, it will be all right when the great conflict is once over; now Fate must have her way."

And he took leave of Herr von Keudell, who forthwith mounted the broad staircase which led to the minister's rooms.





CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST DAY AT HERRENHAUSEN.

KING George of Hanover sat in the forenoon of the same 15th of June in his cabinet at Herrenhausen. The fresh air blew through the open windows, the flowers in the room gave out a pleasant perfume, and the fountains splashed and sparkled before the king's windows in his own especial garden. Everything in the royal residence breathed rest and profound peace, placed as it was quite out of the noise of the town in delightful solitude.

Privy councillor Lex sat at the table near the king, occupied in reading aloud to him the events which had just taken place.

The attendant had brought the king a cigar with some long wooden tongs, and George V. leant comfortably back in his arm chair, slowly blowing a thin blue cloud from the fragrant leaf of the havannah.

"The result of the votes at Frankfort yesterday is known, your majesty," said Lex.

"Well?" said the king, enquiringly.

"The mobilization of the army of the Confederacy was decided upon by nine votes against six."

"That is a majority in favour of Austria, which was

hardly to be desired," said the king. "We are placed by it in an embarrassing situation; however the modification which the votes of Hanover and Hesse will give the measure will deprive it of much of its point."

"I must humbly remark to your majesty that this modification, which mobilizes the Prussian Army Corps with us, while sending back the Austrian, has not been accepted by the majority of voices, and according to my humble opinion it is of very small importance, for matters have come to a point where no legal subtlety, but only powerful deeds can influence the scale."

"But," said the king, "Count Platen believed our vote would cause more moderate measures at Vienna and Berlin——"

"Prussia apparently did not share his views," said Lex, glancing at the despatches before him, "for the Prussian ambassador left the assembly of the Confederation as soon as the votes were declared. He stated that his government considered itself freed from the Confederation, but that it was willing to conclude a new Confederacy upon the basis of the reform project, with individual governments."

"Has it come to this," cried the king, with concern, as he raised himself upright in his chair; "then our German Confederation, the bulwark of peace in Germany and Europe, has given way. What times are ours! But," he added, after a moment's thought, "how can Prussia regard herself as freed from the Confederation? it is contrary to every fundamental law, and the whole of Germany must cling to it all the more closely!"

"I fear the Confederation, which was strong and safe when supported by Austria and Prussia, will have no life left in it when it is deprived of Prussia," said Lex.

The king was silent.

"I am in great anxiety about the future," continued

Lex, with a sigh. "I should be infinitely happier if the treaty of neutrality was in your majesty's hands."

"But, good God!" cried the king, "I have continually declared my determination to remain neutral."

"But the treaty is not concluded," said Lex.

"The Prince of Hesse did not wish to be bound," said the king. "They sent Wimpffen to him from Vienna and my brother Karl to me. You know, the prince replied to me through Meding that he could not form any definite resolution, or conclude any treaty, until the lamentable rupture of the German Confederation was an actual fact. However, he is as determined as I am, to remain neutral. If I were to be hasty in concluding a treaty, from what Count Platen tells me it would alarm them much in Frankfort, and wound them deeply in Vienna."

"I am decidedly of opinion your majesty should have concluded a treaty of neutrality without caring for the alarm it might cause in Frankfort, and if it is still possible, I advise you immediately to conclude such a treaty, without heeding the dissuasions of Count Platen. It is better to sit on one stool than between two."

"You are right!" cried the king, "the thing must come to an end, and neutrality entirely expresses my intentions. Not even the lamentable event in Frankfort can alter my convictions, and I should be acting in direct opposition to them if I took part in any war between two members of the German Confederation. I will summon Platen, and command him immediately to continue the negotiations for the conclusion of the treaty of neutrality."

"I am convinced," said Lex, with satisfaction, "that your majesty will do well, and I shall be at rest, when the treaty is safely in our Archives."

A gentleman in waiting entered.

"Count Platen urgently begs an immediate audience!"

"Let him come in!" cried the king, with surprise.

Lex's face became puckered with anxiety.

Count Platen entered. The indifferent, self-satisfied calm which his face formerly wore had given place to an expression of thoughtful anxiety.

Lex looked at him attentively and uneasily.

"What brings you here in such haste, Count Platen?" cried the king.

"A note," replied the minister, approaching the king's writing-table, "has just been given to me by Prince Ysenburg, on which I am obliged immediately to beg your majesty's gracious decision."

"Well!" said the king anxiously, "what do they want in Berlin? I was just talking about our neutrality, and it appears to me that since the Confederation, alas! is virtually burst asunder, the treaty commenced by verbal negotiations should be at once concluded."

"Your majesty," said Count Platen, as he drew a folded paper from his pocket, "it seems they now require much more in Berlin."

"More!" exclaimed the king, while an expression of surprise and pain was seen on his contracted brows; "what can they require more?"

"They now demand an alliance on the foundation of the Prussian reform project; in return, the sovereignty and possessions of your majesty are to be guaranteed."

"But this is something quite new!" cried the king.

"Too late!" said Lex softly to himself, as he bent his head.

"This reform project," said the king with animation, "takes from me the largest and most essential part of my sovereignty. I have once and for all refused it, and I will never accept it. What sovereignty would be left to

guarantee, after I had yielded the most essential conditions of sovereignty? Tell Prince Ysenburg——”

“Will your majesty,” said Count Platen, “be pleased to listen to Prince Ysenburg’s note? The situation is grave—he will wait for your answer until this evening, and if it is not satisfactory, viz. if your majesty does not accept the alliance, Prussia will regard it as a declaration of war from Hanover.”

The king stood up.

“Have we come to that?” cried he; “but read!”

He covered his face with his hands, and leant back in his chair. Count Platen unfolded the paper he held in his hand, and read the Prussian ultimatum, dated the same day.

Whilst he read the king neither spoke nor moved. As Count Platen ended he raised his head—his features expressing deep earnestness.

“What is your opinion?” he asked calmly.

“Your majesty,” said Count Platen, in a somewhat hesitating and uncertain voice, “I think matters have hardly gone as far as this note would imply,—they wish to exercise severe pressure; and I believe if we could only gain time——”

“But the reply must be given this evening!” interrupted Lex, with a slight tone of impatience in his voice.

“Certainly,” said Count Platen, “your majesty must give an answer, but there is always a *moyen terme* to be found; we may reply that your majesty is willing to conclude a treaty with Prussia; we must avoid the word alliance, but the conditions must first be discussed,—this will give us several days; in the meantime events may happen. Count Ingelheim hourly expects to hear that the Austrians have marched into Saxony, and we can act according to these events.”

"My opinion remains fixed!" said the king, with an expression of firm determination on his proud features, and a movement full of dignity as he threw back his head; "the projected reform, on the foundation of which I am to conclude an alliance, curtails the independence and the holiest rights of the crown, which I inherited from my ancestors, which is guaranteed to me by the whole of Europe, and which I am pledged to leave to my son in the same entire independence. Whilst this is my conviction, I can give but one answer to the Prussian proposal, and that answer is, No! But," he added, "I will have no prevarication, no dilatory negotiations; I wish them clearly to understand me in Berlin,—the neutrality I promised I will keep to, and I am ready formally to conclude it; but to this proposal I will never consent!"

Lex was silent.

Count Platen folded Prince Ysenburg's note and unfolded it again,—he seemed trying to find some modification to the king's decided reply.

George V. rose.

"The position," he said, "in which my family and my kingdom are placed is so grave, and what now occurs is of such immense importance in regard to the future, that I wish to hear the opinion of my assembled ministers."

Count Platen gave a sigh of relief, and nodded approval with his head.

"Drive back to town at once, my dear count, and assemble the ministers without delay."

"Your majesty's commands shall be obeyed," said the count hastily.

"We must," added the king, "take immediate measures for concentrating the army, which is scattered over

the country. I must prevent all needless bloodshed in our own country, and I shall march with the army into South Germany immediately, there to act in concert with my confederates. Thus my kingdom will at least be spared the horrors of war, though I cannot protect it from being occupied by the enemy."

"Your majesty will march yourself!" cried Count Platen.

"I will do my duty," interrupted the king with dignity; "when my soldiers take the field, my place is amongst them. Send mounted orderlies to my adjutant-general, to the chief of the general staff, and to the commandant of the corps of engineers," he said to Lex; "and you, my dear count, hasten and bring back the other ministers as quickly as possible!"

Count Platen and Lex departed.

The king remained alone.

He sat motionless before his table, as if lost in thought. His head sank down deeper and deeper, and occasionally a heavy sigh came from his labouring breast; then he put back his head, and raised his sightless eyes to heaven in silent enquiry.

Both the folding doors were suddenly thrown open, and the groom of the chambers exclaimed:

"Her majesty the queen!"

George V. roused himself, and stood up.

The queen hastily entered the cabinet, and walked up to her husband, who stretched out his hands towards her, and kissed her on the forehead.

Queen Marie was about forty-five years of age, her figure was tall, and still possessed its youthful elasticity, and her movements were extremely graceful. Her face, surrounded by abundant light brown hair, no longer had the fresh rosy colouring and childish features which

appeared in her large half-length portrait, taken at the time of her marriage when Crown Princess, which was hanging over the king's writing table; but her pure, expressive, and intelligent face was still beautiful, and her dark grey eyes sparkled with goodness and animation. But now those eyes were full of care and uneasiness, and there was painful excitement in her voice as she said, looking up at her husband:

"I saw from my window Count Platen come and go hastily, and in this time of anxiety and difficulty I always fear some evil tidings. Is it anything important?" she asked in her strangely beautiful and flexible voice, whilst she looked anxiously at the grave, almost solemn countenance of the king.

George V. replied:

"It would be foolish to say it is nothing; you would soon discover the truth, and a queen will know how to face great perils."

He laid his hand gently on her head.

"Yes, it is important," he said; "this evening we shall be at war with Prussia."

"Oh! my God!" cried the queen, shuddering, "how is that possible? you had determined to remain neutral!"

"They offer me conditions which I cannot accept, without injuring the honour and dignity of my crown. I must refuse—and then war is declared!" said the king in a gentle voice, as if he wished to make the hard tidings easier to bear.

"Horrible!" exclaimed the queen. "Is no escape possible, can I not perhaps mediate?" she cried, as if seized by a sudden inspiration. "Queen Augusta will recoil as I do from such a fratricidal war."

"Yes, it is indeed a fratricidal war," said the king, "for in many a family, whilst one brother fights for me,

another will be in the Prussian service ; but nothing can be done, believe me it is so. I am sure the only thing I can do now is to prevent, as far as possible, bloodshed in my own country. Count Platen believes he can still negotiate."

" Oh ! that he had not negotiated so long," cried the queen impetuously, " then we should not have been in this dreadful position, no help on either side ; at least we should not have been without Gablenz and his troops. Believe me, my own dear husband," she cried affectionately, " Platen's ridiculous indecision has plunged us all into misfortune."

The king listened with a gloomy look.

" Nothing can be altered now," he said, " the situation must be struggled with as it now is. This night I shall join the army with Ernest ; I shall assemble it in the south of the kingdom, that we may reach the southern troops as soon as possible."

" And we—where shall we go ?" cried the queen anxiously.

The king took her head between his two hands, and impressed a kiss upon her brow, then he said, with extreme mildness and gentleness, but with equal determination :

" You and the princesses must remain here."

" Here ?" cried the queen, taking a step backwards in her extreme surprise, whilst she gazed with frightened eyes upon her husband—" here ? during the enemy's occupation ! Impossible, you cannot intend it."

" I do intend it," said the king, " and you, my angel-queen, will be of my opinion when you think over it quietly, of that I am convinced."

The queen looked at him inquiringly, but slightly shook her head.

"I desire," continued the king, "to spare my country all the horrors of war, and to preserve my army from being overpowered in a useless struggle, therefore I must lead them to join the South German army, and thus take a part in the great conflict. From the foreign occupation, with its humiliations, its pain, and its sorrows, I cannot shield my subjects and the families of my country. They must see the soldiers of the enemy in their homes, they must admit them to their houses, whilst their own sons oppose them in the field. As I, with my son, share the fate of the army, so must you, the queen, with our daughters, share the fate of the country; that is our royal duty; no family in Hanover must say that the family of the king acted differently to what was required of the subjects; we are united to our country by bonds which have endured a thousand years, we are flesh of its flesh, and blood of its blood; could you permit it to be said, 'the queen sat still in safety, whilst heavy times oppressed her country?'"

He stretched out his hand to feel for his wife, whilst his head turned towards the side on which he heard the slight rustling of her dress.

The queen had folded her hands together; her eyes had been fixed on her husband, and had gradually lost their expression of fear and anguish; now they shone through tears upon the king.

As he ceased speaking she took his outstretched hand, put his arm around her shoulders, and pressed close to him.

"You are right!" she cried, "Oh! as ever you are right! Your great, noble heart always knows what is good and just. Yes, my king, my husband, I will stay here, separated from you, but united through our country, our love, our duty!"

"I knew that you would be of my opinion," said the king calmly and affectionately. "My queen could not think and feel differently to myself."

And they stood for some time in a silent embrace. The queen wept quietly, and laid her head upon the king's broad breast, and with his hand he gently stroked her luxuriant hair.

The flowers still gave out their perfume, the fountains plashed on, the birds sang in the trees, and all nature breathed happy peace; and over all the sunshine, over all the sweet spring scents and the singing, hung unseen the heavy thunder-cloud and the forked flash which was to destroy all this quiet happiness, all this royal splendour, for ever.

A knock was heard at the door.

The king gently put the queen from him.

"The ministers await your commands," said Lex, as he entered.

"Now," said the king gently to his wife, "leave me to arrange what is needful with the ministers. We will see one another again."

"May God bless your councils," said the queen fervently.

"These are evil times, dear Lex," said the queen, affectionately, to the privy councillor, who bowed low as she passed him; "would that they were safely over!" And she slowly left the king's cabinet.

The ministers entered and seated themselves around the table.

Besides Count Platen, Bacmeister, and General von Brandis, the minister of the household and supreme chamberlain, von Malortie, was present. He was an old gentleman, with short grey hair and a small wrinkled face, who, from his discontented expression, bent figure,

tall black necktie, and half buttoned-up frock-coat, looked more like an invalided government clerk than the witty composer of a book considered as an authority at every court, "The Lord Chamberlain as he should be."

There was besides the minister of equity, Leonhardt, the well-known lawmaker, a plain, slight man, with thin hair and sharply-cut, intelligent features, whose expressive, animated, and penetrating eyes were concealed behind silver spectacles; the minister for education, von Hodenburg, a fair man, who was still young, and who had formerly been diplomatic resident at the Hague; and also the young minister of finance, Dietrichs, who had been named as secretary by Count Platen—a highly-aristocratic minister, and whom the king had appointed, saying, "If he has ability, and if he works, he will some day be minister himself."

All these gentlemen had entered the king's cabinet in deep and solemn silence. When they had taken their places, George V. spoke:

"Gentlemen, the King of Prussia, through the ambassador at my court, has proposed to conclude an alliance with me, now that the German Confederation is at an end. You know what has taken place in Frankfort. I do not consider the dissolution of the German Confederacy as lawfully accomplished by the declaration of the Prussian ambassador, though, alas! I must acknowledge that the German union is in fact broken. Since the misfortune to Germany is unavoidable, of a war between Austria and Prussia, I desire, as I repeat before you all, to enter into a treaty of neutrality with the King of Prussia. But that is not what his Majesty of Prussia requires of me. Count Platen, I beg you to read aloud Prince Ysenburg's note."

Count Platen slowly read the Prussian ultimatum. When he had ended, the king again spoke:

"I believe, gentlemen, that you are acquainted with the Prussian project of reform on the foundation of which I should have to conclude this alliance?"

The ministers simultaneously assented.

"I should resign," continued the king, "authority over, and the command of, my army in time of war—the army of Minden, of the Peninsula, of Garcia, Fernandez, of Waterloo—and this army would then be compelled to march against the united German forces who have taken the side of Austria. I ask you, my ministers, before God and your consciences, and upon the oath you have taken to me and to your country, Can I accept this proposition? Can I as the defender of the royal rights of my family? Can I as the defender of my country? Can I according to the constitution of the kingdom? Answer first, Count Platen, as minister of foreign affairs."

Count Platen rubbed his hands gently together, rocked himself slightly to and fro, and replied: "No, your majesty. It would perhaps——"

"And you, Herr von Malortie, as minister of my household?"

The chamberlain, who sat huddled up more than usual in his black neckcloth and frock-coat, said in a low voice, "No, your majesty."

"And you, my minister of equity?"

Leonhardt answered shortly, in a clear, firm voice, "No!"

"The minister of the interior?"

"No, never!" replied Bacmeister.

The ministers of war, of education, and of finance gave the same answer.

The king rose, the assembled ministers with him.

"I perceive with great pleasure, gentlemen," said

George V., "that you all give the same answer to the Prussian proposal which I, from regard to the rights of my crown and of my country, immediately gave to Count Platen when he first read me the ultimatum. It is a great comfort to me to find myself at one with my assembled ministers on so important a question; not, gentlemen, that I shun the responsibility, or wish to lay it upon your shoulders"—the king raised his head proudly—"but this unanimous answer from you all, I regard as a pledge that the sufferings which my country may have to bear, from refusing the Prussian proposition, are unavoidably and inevitably sent from God. If, however, we are all of one mind that I cannot accept the alliance on the basis proposed, we must all immediately take the measures our very serious position requires. I shall lead the army into south Germany, and I must, therefore, concentrate it at once in the south of the kingdom. I must immediately arrange the details with my generals. The queen and the princesses will remain here, and will share the fate of the country!"

A murmur of applause was heard.

"Your majesty," said Bacmeister, "I must ask you to decide at once on a relevant question."

"What is it?" asked the king.

"General von Manteuffel is at Harburg," said the minister, "and demands railway carriages in which to transport the Prussian troops to Minden. The railway directors want to know what they must do."

The king gnashed his teeth.

"When war is declared he will be in the centre of the country!" he cried. "Order all the carriages to be sent here at once. We shall require them for the transport of the troops."

"Further," continued the minister, "we must dissolve

the States Assembly under these circumstances. When Count Platen confided to me our position, I drew up the order of dissolution."

"Produce it," cried the king.

The minister laid the order upon the table.

"The secretary-general is without," said he.

"Let him come in!"

Bacmeister hastened out, and returned with the secretary-general of the ministry, in whose presence the king executed the order for the dissolution of the States Assembly.

"And now, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "you will all go to work in your different ways, to struggle against these evil times, and may the triune, almighty, and just God grant that I may once more see you here again, happily assembled around me. I beg Count Platen and General Brandis to remain."

The other ministers bowed gravely and silently, and left the cabinet.

"You will now, Count Platen," said the king, "give Prince Ysenburg his answer, as clear and decided an answer as you have all pronounced!"

"I will obey your commands, your majesty," said Count Platen. "You do not, however, command a form which will entirely exclude all possibility of future negotiations?"

"You still believe in negotiations?" exclaimed the king. "Let the reply be friendly and courteous," he added; "let my desire for neutrality be again expressed, but on the subject of the reform project let there be no doubt."

"If it be your majesty's pleasure," said Count Platen, "I think Herr von Meding should draw up our reply. He will be sure to use no harsh expressions, and from his talent in the choice of words——"

"Let Meding draw up our reply by all means," interrupted the king, "but I fear the best words will have no result. Send Meding to me with our answer as soon as it is ready."

"I will obey your commands, your majesty," said Count Platen, as he hastily withdrew.

"You, my dear general, must remain here," said the king, turning to the minister of war, "in order to discuss with me, the adjutant-general, and the chief of the staff the best means of concentrating the army."

"Are the generals here?" he inquired of Lex.

"They await your majesty's commands," he replied.

"Let them come in."

"I feel young again," said General von Brandis, "at the thought of taking the field with your majesty and the army. My heart beats, as in the time of the great Wellington!"

"Then Germany was united," said the king, with a deep sigh.

The generals sat in consultation at Herrenhausen, the *aidès-de-camp* galloped to and from the town, the telegraph conveyed orders to all the commandants of troops in the kingdom, and the city of Hanover was in a fever of excitement. Small crowds assembled in the usually quiet streets, and the position of affairs was loudly discussed. Immense was the excitement when one of the initiated imparted the great news—the army is to march into South Germany, the king goes with it. For some time past the feelings of the people had been extremely anti-Prussian, the king had been openly blamed for allowing the Kalik brigade and General Gablenz to go, every possible ovation had been given to the Austrian troops, and now—when a war was inevitable, when the gravity of the position was apparent to every one, the people felt

overwhelmed with disquiet and care. And that the king himself was to go, seemed completely to stun the good Hanoverians.

They may take the line of opposition, they may blame and criticize what had been done, and what had not been done,—but the capital without the king,—the idea was horrible and beyond belief, and already voices were raised bestowing blame. “The king leaves us alone; the enemy will have no restraint, we shall be given up to pillage.”

But then the reply was heard, “The queen remains here with the princesses; they will protect the capital by their presence, a royal lady must be respected,” and this intelligence reassured many.

All sorts of notions were discussed, the most timid hastened to the burgomaster and the burgher superintendents, to stir them up to take some step to prevent the king from leaving the city; others urged the concentration of the troops in the capital; others proposed the destruction of the railways; in a word endless advice, political and military, was given away in the streets, and each adviser thought his plan the only one which could save the city and the country. In the meantime the troops in garrison at Hanover marched to the station, and were sent off by railway; other battalions and squadrons arrived, and after a short delay were also dispatched, but everything was done so quietly that the crowd standing about the railway station never perceived the military proceedings.

In the large square before the station stood a group of citizens in earnest conversation, whilst a small dark man with a pale face and brilliant eyes endeavoured to calm them. They were large powerful men of the old Saxon race, who may be relied upon to act, under circumstances which they understand, but who lose all their courage

and presence of mind if they find themselves in an unusual and unexpected position. The North German and Saxon character always requires time to accustom itself to new and unforeseen events, before it can show all its worth; everything new, sudden, and unusual, stuns it, and cripples its powers.

So it was now; these strong powerful men, with their large characteristic features, stood looking depressed and puzzled, an expression of great discontent and displeasure upon their faces, and their displeasure they were quite ready to pour out upon the government, for they were accustomed to hold the government answerable for everything, and to sulk with it, if the calm routine of their daily life was disturbed.

"But do be reasonable," cried the small pale man, gesticulating energetically; "you are no longer children, and you surely might have foreseen that they would not go on for ever in Germany, speechifying and resolving over their beer, but that in the end they would *do* something. Besides, you know nothing as yet for certain."

"That is what is so wrong," interrupted a large corpulent man, with a deep bass voice; "that is what is so wrong; we know nothing; we might at least be informed of what is about to take place, then every citizen might set his house in order, and provide for the future."

"But wait," cried the little man vehemently; "you have heard that the generals are now at Herrenhausen with the king, and that the ministers have only just returned. How can you be told of things until they are decided upon? I suppose," he said, laughing scornfully, "the king should call the whole town and the suburbs to his councils."

"Sonntag is right!" said a thin old man, in a plain burgher dress, and speaking in the Saxon Low German,

still commonly used by the middle and lower classes in town and country. "Sonntag is right; we must wait and see what will happen; the king will tell us all in good time; he certainly will not leave us without saying what we are to do; he is the son of Ernest Augustus," he said soothingly to the other burghers, who evidently listened to him with much greater confidence than they had bestowed on the small, pale, animated merchant, Sonntag.

"Look!" cried the latter suddenly; "there is Count Wedel's carriage at the railway station!" and he pointed out an elegant open carriage which had drawn up before the large entrance to the station, whilst the beautiful horses pawed the ground; "let us wait for the count, he will know what is going on."

He hastened to the carriage, the others following him.

In a short time the governor of the castle, Count Alfred Wedel, came out of the station in undress uniform.

He saw with astonishment a crowd of citizens surrounding his carriage as if they wished to block up the road.

"Come, what is going on here?" he asked kindly; "you here, Herr Sonntag? and you too, old Conrad?" and he walked towards the old weather-beaten man, who, with Sonntag, had left the crowd, and going close up to him he offered him his hand.

"Count," said Conrad, the old court saddler, a veteran who had fought in the great wars, and who had been an especial favourite with King Ernest Augustus, who used often to talk to him, and who enjoyed his extremely unceremonious answers, which usually contained a good deal of national wit, "Count," and he pushed aside Herr Sonntag, who was anxious to speak, with his strong hand, "we are all in much trouble and uneasiness about

what is going to happen. We do hear, now and then, that war is about to break out, and the king is going to leave us,—that makes all the citizens very uncomfortable about the fate of the town, and we all want to know something for certain."

"Yes," cried the merchant Sonntag, who had freed himself from Conrad's restraining hand, and who now stepped forward; "yes, count, all these gentlemen are very anxious and uneasy, quite ready to lose all courage. I have taken great pains to calm them, but in vain. I pray you, sir, to tell them what is taking place, and what they ought to do."

An expression of anxiety was seen on all the faces as they turned to the handsome, strongly made young man who before replying examined the crowd for a moment with his clear calm gaze.

"What is taking place?" he then said in a loud firm voice; "that is easily told, war stands before the gate, and the king takes the field with the army."

"And leaves us here behind in an open town!" was murmured by the crowd.

A bright flush passed over the young count's brow, and an indignant look flashed from his eyes as he heard the complaint.

"Does not the Hanoverian soldier march and leave his family at home?" he cried. "The queen and the princesses remain here, and I stay with her majesty."

"Ah!" resounded from the crowd, "if the queen stays here it is not so bad a look-out for the city."

"Bad or good, the queen shares your fate, and the king his soldiers'; is that right or wrong? Answer," cried Count Wedel.

"Right," cried old Conrad in a loud voice, and "Yes! yes!" was faintly echoed by the crowd.

"But," added Count Wedel, in a loud and grave voice, "you have asked me what you are to do."

He advanced a step or two, until he was quite surrounded by the citizens, and he turned his flashing eyes from one to another.

"What!" he cried, "Hanoverian citizens do not know what they are to do when their country is in danger, and their king and the army take the field? Old Conrad can tell you better than I, what he saw in the old times of which I have only heard the history. The army is on the peace foundation," he continued with animation, "everything is wanting, transport, stores, help of all kinds, the cannon have to be taken from the arsenal to the railway station, and Hanoverian citizens stand still to murmur and complain? Get horses and workers, and if the horses will not hold out, we will draw them ourselves, for I will be amongst you as soon as my duty permits. The army takes the field," he continued, "and the commissariat must be organized; are the soldiers to starve? Form committees to provide abundance of food and drink here at the railway station from whence it can be sent off to the different magazines as necessity may arise. And," he cried, "to-day or to-morrow the troops may encounter the enemy, there will be plenty of sick and wounded, and you must prevent your wives from complaining and lamenting. Let them make bandages and scrape lint, it will be wanted; go to my wife, she will advise you how to arrange everything. And further, how often have you played at soldiers at your rifle clubs; now the troops are going, shall the queen remain unguarded in Herrenhausen? Is there no citizen who will keep guard over the queen when the king trusts her to his capital? Now," he added slowly, "I have told you what you have to do, and there is so much to be done, that

really there is no time for anyone to stand here to idle and grumble."

The citizens were silent; the little merchant Sonntag examined them with looks of triumph.

Old Conrad scratched behind his ear.

"Donnerwetter!" he broke out at last; "the count speaks the truth, and a shame it is that we old fellows should have to be told all that by a young gentleman. But now come on," he cried in a loud voice, "let us all set to work, let us separate, and assemble the citizens, here is Sonntag who understands it, he shall make the committees, I am off to the arsenal." He walked up to Count Wedel. "You are true Hanoverian blood, count!" he said bluntly, "and you have spoken your mind plainly; but you were quite right, and you shall see the citizens of Hanover on the move—and you old fellow up there!" he cried, taking off his cap and looking up at the bronze statue of King Ernest Augustus, standing in the midst of the square, "you shall see how old Conrad and all the Hanoverians will stand by your son!"

He offered his hand to the count, who shook it heartily.

All the citizens seemed changed as if by magic. The discontent and restlessness had gone from their faces, and their looks expressed high courage and firm determination. They all crowded round Count Wedel as he got into his carriage and offered him their strong hard hands.

The horses started at a rapid pace and the carriage rolled away on the road to Herrenhausen. An hour later the appearance of the town was completely changed.

No longer whispering groups of idlers were seen standing in the streets, everywhere there was intelligent, cheerful, energetic industry, men of all classes, artisans and servants, dragged carriages and hand-barrows laden with arms from the arsenal to the railway. Others

brought cartloads of provisions of every kind, some for the consumption of the troops on their journey, some to be forwarded to the different magazines. The women hurried about the streets with light steps and busy looks, making collections and receiving promises of help. The most influential ladies presented themselves at the door of Count Wedel's new imposing-looking house. They were received by the countess, and formed into one large committee.

Old Conrad was at the arsenal assisting in loading the arms, now ordering, now rebuking the unskilful with a round oath, and everywhere, on whatever side you turned, was the merchant Sonntag, paler than usual from excitement, hot with talking so much, ordering, encouraging, animating those around to unceasing and fruitful exertions.

Thus evening fell upon the city, and the sun set for the last time upon the Guelphic king in the castle of his forefathers.

It was nine o'clock when the minister Meding drove rapidly along the broad road, lighted on either side by gas lamps, to Herrenhausen, with the answer to the Prussian ultimatum.

As he mounted the steps, it seemed as if the uneasiness and activity which prevailed in the city had not spread to the palace. The porter stood as usual before his lodge, the servants in their scarlet liveries moved noiselessly through the large vestibules, but on every face appeared deep anxiety.

In the courtyard were several waggons, with lighted lamps, and the under servants were filling them with coffers. With anxious expectation the attendants saw the well-known confidant of the king arrive at so unusual an hour, but severe etiquette prevented a word

of inquiry, though the uneasy looks betrayed the fears to which each was a prey.

"Is the king in his cabinet?" inquired Meding.

"His majesty is with the queen."

Meding ascended the stairs to the floor above, which he had so often seen crowded by the brilliant uniforms of officers, and the elegant toilettes of ladies, and which now looked empty and lonely in the light of the candelabra.

Before the door of the queen's apartments her groom of the chambers, with snow-white hair, sat in a large arm-chair, and the king's groom of the chambers stood beside him.

"Inform his majesty that I am here!" said Herr Meding.

The attendant hesitated a moment.

"Forgive me," he said, "for asking if war is really to break out, and if we shall have the enemy here?"

"It is too true, my dear Mahlmann," said Herr Meding, in a sad voice, "but announce me at once, no time must be lost."

"Oh! my God! what times!" cried the king's groom of the chambers, as he entered the apartments, while the queen's grey-headed servant covered his face with his hands.

Herr Meding following the king's attendant through the large ante-room and was shown at once into the queen's drawing-room. Here all the royal family were assembled round the tea-table.

The king wore a general's uniform, and sat beside the queen smiling and cheerful; she commanded herself and repressed the tears she could hardly refrain from shedding. Next the queen sat the Princess Marie, a slender maiden of seventeen, with beautiful and noble features,

and large blue enthusiastic eyes; less accustomed to self-command than her mother, she could not help weeping, and her handkerchief had frequently to be applied to prevent her tears from falling. On the other side of the king sat his eldest daughter, the Princess Frederika; fair, tall, and slender, she greatly resembled her sister, but her face possessed her father's noble expression, and although she was entirely without haughtiness or self-esteem, her whole bearing, her every movement, bore witness to her royal birth. She did not weep, her large clear blue eyes looked proud and brave, sometimes the beautiful teeth bit the full fresh lips, and in her heart she longed to accompany her father to the field of battle, and dreaded remaining at home in solitary idleness, waiting for tidings of the fate of the army and of her country.

Opposite to her sat, or rather lay back in his chair, the Crown Prince Ernest Augustus, a large tall young man of one-and-twenty. His face had not the smallest resemblance to his father's. A low retreating forehead was almost concealed by his thick smooth brown hair. His nose deeply indented at the bridge was almost flat to his face, and his large mouth with its full rosy lips seemed to move with difficulty over his slowly spoken words. Beautiful teeth and bright good-natured eyes, however, gave a certain charm to the young prince's appearance.

The crown prince wore the uniform of the Guard Hussars, a blue coat ornamented with silver braid, he bit the nails of his left hand, while with his right he patted a little terrier, which appeared devoted to him.

Such was the picture which met Meding's eyes as he entered the room.

"Well, then, the thing is decided!" exclaimed the king quite cheerfully. "I have commanded the concentration of the army in Göttingen," he added, turning to Meding, "by my generals' advice, that they may march thence to the south. I shall start at two o'clock. I beg you, my dear Meding to drive to General Brandis and to Count Platen; request them to be ready for the journey, and tell them to meet me at the railway station at two to-night. I must ask you also to make your preparations and to accompany me; I shall need you. You will have but little time!" he added considerably.

"Oh! fully enough, your majesty," replied Meding.

"I believe," said the king to his son, "that you must yourself give the orders necessary to prevent any of your equipments being forgotten. And now, my dear Meding, give me the answer, that I may sign it."

Meding took a pen from the queen's writing-table, gave it to the king and placed his hand upon the white margin of the paper.

In firm bold characters the king wrote his initials, "G. R."

"Add to it," he said, "the exact hour, that we may know hereafter when I completed this decisive and important document."

Meding looked at his watch; it was twelve minutes past midnight. He added the exact date below the king's signature.

"I must now beg your majesty's permission to go," he said, "for time presses." He turned to the queen. "Allow me, your majesty, to offer my truest sympathy, and my most sincere hopes, that you may pass safely through the dark days before us. May God bless your majesty, and may He guide events to a happy issue."

The queen bent her head and covered her face with her handkerchief.

"Auf Wiedersehn!" cried the king, and with a low bow Meding withdrew.

In the ante-room he met a young man dressed in the uniform of the Garde du corps.

He was tall and slight, with merry, pleasing features and large clear eyes, it was Prince George of Solms Braunfels, the king's nephew. He held out his hand to Meding and cried:

"Well, is everything settled, and is war decided upon?"

"I am taking back the answer to the Prussian note!" said Meding gravely, looking at the folded paper in his hand.

The prince looked serious too for a moment.

"Do you know," he then said, "what you remind me of? Of Davison, Queen Elizabeth's secretary, carrying the death warrant!"

Meding gave a melancholy smile.

"Alas!" he said, "the sheet of paper in my hand is perhaps the death warrant of many a brave heart now beating joyfully; thank God I am not answerable for it, I have only to perform my duty, which I never felt to be so painful as now. We shall meet in Göttingen, prince," he said, taking leave with a hasty pressure of the hand, he then hurried down the stairs and threw himself into his carriage.

Just at the brightly lighted, gilded iron gate of the outer court he met a long row of carriages driving to the castle.

The magistrates and the principal burghers of the capital were coming to take leave of the king. As the long file of carriages emerged from the avenue, they

looked so dark against the bright light that they resembled a long black funeral, and shuddering involuntarily at this idea Meding leant back in his carriage and drove towards Hanover.

In the meantime Count Platen sat in his cabinet. A small lamp shed its light over the writing table covered with letters and papers, before which he sat, his head leaning on his hand.

"Is there really no escape?" he cried at last, as he rose and paced up and down the room; "can we not recover the fine position we held?"

He looked thoughtfully from the window out into the warm starlight night.

"The concentration of the army is good," he said, "it shows we are in earnest, and not inclined to give way without resistance: that the king should go, is also good—it makes negotiation easier. Well, I believe," he cried in a tone of relief, "they will bethink themselves in Berlin after firing off this alarm gun, and will be satisfied if we accept neutrality. But even if we are obliged—they cannot abandon us in Vienna—and if Austria conquers!" A happy smile passed over his face, and flattering pictures of the future seemed unrolled before his mind.

The timepiece on his writing-table struck twelve.

"Prince Ysenburg!" announced the groom of the chambers.

"Now, at this hour?" cried Count Platen, starting back. And he hastened to meet the Prussian ambassador, who had entered the room, and advanced slowly and gravely. "What good news do you bring at this late hour, dear prince?" he asked.

"Whether I can bring good news, I know not!" replied the prince, a small slight man, with regular features

and a spare black moustache, as he fixed his black eyes with a sad and enquiring look upon Count Platen; "I must first beg for your answer to the note I delivered this morning, the reply to which I was to wait for until this evening. You see," he said drawing out his watch, "I have given my instructions the widest possible extension; it is now twelve o'clock—the day is ended."

"My dear prince," said Count Platen, "I gave the note to the king immediately, the reply is now with his majesty; I expect it back every moment, and I do not doubt we shall easily come to an understanding."

The prince shook his head slightly.

"Though the answer is with his majesty, yet you must know, and I *must*"—he laid a stress upon the word—"urgently beg you to impart its purport. Is the proposition accepted, are you authorized to conclude the proffered treaty?"

"You will allow," said Count Platen, "that such a deeply important proposal as the reform of the confederation requires a discussion that will occupy some time."

"I must press you, Count Platen," said the prince, "to give me a distinct answer upon one point,—I am not authorized to commence a discussion,—has the king accepted the treaty or not?"

"No," said Count Platen, with great hesitation, "but——"

"Then I declare war!" said Prince Ysenburg solemnly. Count Platen stared blankly in his face.

"But my dear prince—" he cried.

"You must perceive," said Prince Ysenburg, "that after such a declaration it is impossible for me to say anything more, except to express my deep personal regret that our long years of intimacy, on which I shall always

look back with pleasure, should have so sad an end. Farewell! remember me with the same friendship with which I shall always think of you."

He held out his hand to Count Platen, who seized it mechanically, and before the minister had recovered from his astonishment the ambassador had left the room.

A short time afterwards, Meding arrived, and found him still under the influence of this scene. He brought the minister the king's commands to accompany him to Göttingen, and Count Platen imparted the declaration of war.

"Did you ever doubt it?" asked Meding.

"I considered it impossible!" said Count Platen; "and I yet hope we may be able to do something in Göttingen."

"There is nothing to be done, except to march as fast as we can for South Germany!" said the privy councillor.

He left the minister, to prepare for his journey, and hastened to seek General Brandis.

Herr Beckmann had come to Hanover with the courier from Berlin, and he discovered to his great discontent that he could not set out again upon his already retarded journey, until various trains containing troops had been despatched from the railway station.

It was two in the morning.

He walked disconsolately up and down the platform, wrapped himself shiveringly in his large travelling cloak, smoked his cigar, and looked at the busy proceedings in the railway station.

There was a train with a steaming engine close to the platform; it consisted of only a few carriages, but in the centre there was a large saloon carriage richly gilt, and surmounted by a crown.

"What is that?" asked Herr Beckmann as a busy porter hurried past.

"The king is going to Göttingen," he replied, and hastened on.

Herr Beckmann walked up to the saloon carriage and examined it.

"It is true," he said, "the king must really be starting; but," he added, "it does not look like a flight, the soldiers, at all events, seem to have no mind to fly."

Notwithstanding the late hour the platform grew more and more crowded with people, who waited quietly near the royal train.

Then the large doors of the royal waiting-room opened, and Count Platen, a number of generals, Lex, and Herr Meding appeared. They all seemed grave and silent.

The wheels of other carriages were heard.

There was a movement amongst the gentlemen in the waiting-room, and the crowd on the platform pressed towards the open door.

The king entered, dressed in a general's uniform, leaning on the arm of the crown prince, who wore a hussar's uniform. They were followed by lieutenant-colonels von Heimbruch and von Kohlrausch, and by Major Wedel.

The king gravely greeted those who had assembled to take leave of him, he conversed with several of the gentlemen and shook hands with them.

The general director of the railway came up and said that the train was ready.

The king and the crown prince walked across the platform and entered the railway carriage.

Every head was uncovered, and a sorrowful murmur passed through the assembled crowd.

The king was followed by the gentlemen of his suite. The crowd thickened around the carriage.

Then George V. appeared at the middle window, bowed, and said in his clear voice:

"I say farewell to the citizens of my capital, because I must accompany my army to resist unjust demands. My queen and the princesses I confide to your protection; they will share your fate. God be with you, and with our just cause!"

"God save the king!" cried the crowd; "auf Wiedersehn! auf Wiedersehn. God bless your majesty!" Handkerchiefs waved, and hats rose higher and higher.

Herr Beckmann stood in the outer row. Tears shone in his eyes, he raised his hat in the air and his voice joined in the general cry with which the citizens of Hanover took leave of their king.

The train moved slowly, the engine puffed, the wheels rolled faster, and there was one general cry: "Auf Wiedersehn!" The carriage rushed on, the king had left the capital.

The generals and court officials slowly departed, the crowd slowly and silently dispersed, and Herr Beckmann paced thoughtfully up and down the platform.

"Tiens, tiens," said he to himself, "voilà le revers de la médaille. What will not this war destroy? how deeply will it cut into human life, both high and low! Great events lie in the lap of the future: yes, but tears also—did not my eyes grow wet when the king took leave of his people. Well! what must happen, will happen, an individual can neither add nor take away. Fate seizes on us all!"

"The train is starting for Cologne," said a porter coming up to him.

"At last!" cried Herr Beckmann with a sigh of relief; and the whistling, puffing engine soon bore him away.



CHAPTER XII.

CAMPAIGNING BEGINS.

KING GEORGE V. arrived in Göttingen early in the morning of the 16th of June, to the no small amazement of the inhabitants, who had scarcely comprehended the grave position of the country the evening before, and arose the next day to discover that war had broken out, that the king was installed in the Crown Hotel, and the army concentrating in hot haste in and around Göttingen.

The old city of Georgia Augusta had scarcely ever before seen such varied active life within its walls.

Fresh troops perpetually poured in through the gates of the town, or from the railway station; some taking up their quarters in the city, some in the surrounding villages.

All the soldiers were adorned with fresh sprigs of oak, the proud cavalry regiments rode gallantly on, batteries of artillery rolled noisily over the pavement, and merry songs resounded from every regiment of the war-inspired troops.

In front of the Crown Hotel the greatest activity prevailed. Orderlies of the red hussars of the Guard were halted, waiting to convey orders; aides-de-camp went and

came, servants hurried busily to and fro, groups of citizens stood whispering together, and looking curiously at the middle window of the first floor, where was the king's apartment.

But a fresh regiment streamed in, and shortly before it reached the hotel struck up the air of "God save the king;" the window was opened, and the king appeared in a general's uniform and military cap, grave and quiet; he affectionately greeted the troops who came at his summons to follow him to the field, and their banners were lowered to their royal leader. The old Hanoverian Hurrah! burst out so loudly and joyfully that it made the windows clatter, and the king's heart beat higher, for he could hear that the shout came from the hearts of soldiers who were ready cheerfully to pour out their blood in his defence.

About nine o'clock the Senate of the University appeared, headed by the pro-rector, the famous professor of state law, Zachariä; the black robes adorned with the colours of the different faculties, and the almost priestly appearance of the professors of wisdom, who came to greet their king in the midst of the tumult of war, lent a new charm to the animated changing picture, as they mingled with the brilliant uniforms of the soldiers.

The king had received the professors, had worked with the adjutant-generals, and with General Gebser, whom he had appointed commander-in-chief of the army, and he now sat alone in his room.

His face was pale and weary from the distress and excitement of the last few days, and from a sleepless night, but indomitable courage and firm determination shone in his eyes.

The groom of the chambers opened the door and announced the crown prince.

The king held out his hand affectionately to his son, who kissed it reverently.

"Have you slept?" asked the king.

"But little," replied the prince, whose features, impressed by the moving noisy life around him, were more animated than usual; "I have been talking with many of the officers of the troops who have just arrived."

"There is a glorious spirit in the army, is there not?" cried the king with joyful enthusiasm; "it makes me too happy to be surrounded by such troops."

"Yes," replied the prince with hesitation, "the spirit is excellent; but——"

"But what?" asked the king, surprised and hurt, "have you observed anything that does not accord with this spirit?"

"The spirit is perfectly excellent, my father," replied the prince slowly, pausing as he spoke as if he could not find the right words; "but—but there is no proper confidence in their leaders!"

"No confidence in their leaders!" cried the king energetically, as he stood up; "at the beginning of a campaign that were bad indeed!"

He was silent for a moment.

"Are you quite sure?" he asked. "Who told you so?"

"Several officers of the general staff," replied the prince, "the aides-de-camp, and they begged me to tell you."

"So!" said the king. "And in whom have they no confidence?—did they mention any names?"

"They do not think," replied the prince, "that General Gebser has energy enough to command in the field, and his name is not popular amongst the soldiers, and General Tschirschnitz is too old to bear the fatigues of war, and too much accustomed to office life——"

With a hasty movement the king passed his hand over the table before him and rang the bell that stood upon it.

"The equerry on duty!" exclaimed the king to the attendant who came at the summons.

Immediately afterwards Count Wedel, the brother of the commander of the castle, entered.

"Your majesty sent for me?"

"My dear Wedel," said the king, "the crown prince has just told me, as was his duty, that the officers and the troops have no confidence in General Gebser, whom I have appointed to the command of the army, and that they also have not the confidence needful in the adjutant-general. The moment is grave. Tell me, as my equerry and my officer, on your oath and your duty, what you know on the subject."

Count Wedel, a handsome powerfully made man, with short black hair and a black beard, fixed his large dark eyes upon the king, and said firmly in a clear voice:

"What his royal highness has told your majesty is, so far as I have had the opportunity of judging of the general opinion, perfectly true!"

The king sat still for a moment in deep thought.

"And you have heard it from good and clever officers?" he asked.

"From the officers of the general staff," replied Count Wedel, "and from several other officers with whom I have conversed."

"And whom would the army trust as their leader?" asked the king.

"General von Arentschildt!" replied Count Wedel without a moment's hesitation.

"I thank you," replied the king gravely; "beg General von Brandis and Count Platen to come to me."

"At your command, your majesty."

And Count Wedel left the room.

"This is bad, very bad!" said the king sorrowfully, "for an army that has no confidence in its leaders is already half beaten; but it is well I learnt it whilst there is still time."

The crown prince had stepped to the window and was looking at the various groups in the street below.

The two ministers entered, General von Brandis calm and cheerful as ever, Count Platen pale and excited.

"Gentlemen," said the king, "I hear that the adjutant-general, and the general I have chosen to command the army, do not possess the confidence of the troops."

He was silent.

"Alas! it is so, your majesty; I have heard it on all sides," said Count Platen.

"And you, General Brandis?"

"Your majesty," said the general in his calm voice, "I have heard many such expressions here, I cannot deny, but if every expression uttered in a time of excitement were attended to, the command would be continually changed. The chief thing seems to me that we should be well commanded, and get on quickly."

"I do not think much of what is said here and there," said the king, "but this appears to me serious, and truly I would not send my army into the field without confidence in its leaders."

"Certainly, your majesty, the matter is serious," said Count Platen. "It is most painful to me," he continued, "to express my opinion on military affairs, as they by no means belong to my department, and as your majesty knows I am never in any degree influenced by the opinions I hear casually——"

General Brandis smiled slightly.

"But here," added Count Platen, "is evidently an occasion on which the general opinion must be right."

"Have you, too, heard General von Arentschildt named?"

"He is named universally, your majesty," replied Count Platen.

General Brandis was silent.

"I know so little of Arentschildt," said the king, thoughtfully; "what do you think of him, General Brandis?"

"Arentschildt is a clever general, and an honourable man," said the minister of war.

"Do you think he is the man to command the army?" asked the king.

"Your majesty, the proof of a general is his success. I am an old soldier, and I can only judge of a soldier in the field."

The king leant his head on his hand and sat for some time in silence.

At last he raised himself.

"My country and the whole future of my family are at stake," he said seriously. "I must sacrifice my personal wishes and opinions, where such great interests are concerned. I could never forgive myself if success were imperilled through my own fault; no time must be lost, the decision must be made at once. My poor brave Tschirschnitz," he said in a low voice, shaking his head; "it will be a heavy blow to him. Whom do they feel confidence in as adjutant-general?" he inquired.

"They speak of Colonel Dammers," said the crown prince, who had left the window and again approached the king.

"Colonel Dammers?" asked the king.

"A clever and energetic officer," said General Brandis, "a man of quick and ready action."

"I have conversed with him," said Count Platen, "he is a remarkably intelligent man. I unfolded to him the policy we have lately pursued, he fully recognized its propriety. I believe——"

"Is the colonel here?" asked the king.

"He was in the house just now," said the crown prince. The king rang.

"Beg General Gebser and the adjutant-general to come to me," he said, sighing.

The two gentlemen entered the room.

General Gebser was of a tall and graceful figure, his boldly-cut features had a free open expression, and his hair and moustache were slightly grey. General von Tschirschnitz held a paper in his hand.

"My dear General Gebser, and you my adjutant-general," said the king with emotion, "I have something most serious to say to you. I have to demand from you a fresh proof of your patriotism and of your devotion to me and to my family."

General Gebser looked firmly at the king; old General von Tschirschnitz lifted his astonished gaze from the paper he held in his hand to his royal master, as if he marvelled what further proof of devotion could be expected from him.

"In an hour such as this," continued the king, "plain and straightforward speaking is necessary. I hear that the army does not confirm the choice I made, General Gebser, when I nominated you as its commander, and that another name is more popular than your own amongst the soldiers. Also," he added, "I hear that fears are expressed lest you, my dear adjutant-general, should be disabled by increasing years from undergoing

the fatigue which will doubtless be needful during a difficult and exhausting campaign. Should your health fail there would be an interruption in your duties, which could not but be dangerous and disastrous to an army on the march. Gentlemen," he said in a low tone, bowing his head as if he wished with his sightless eyes to discover the impression caused by his words; "you know that I am ready to sacrifice my life, and every personal wish to my country. I know that you have the same feelings, and that from your true hearts I may ask the same sacrifice. I, your king, acknowledging and prizing your services and your talents, I beg you to make this sacrifice."

The king was silent, a deep sigh broke from his heart.

General Gebser raised his head proudly, and a smile came to his lips. Pale, but without hesitation, he advanced towards the king, and said in a firm voice:

"It was my duty, at my royal master's command to lead the army against his enemies, and to draw my sword in defence of my country. It is equally my duty, if your majesty has found one more worthy, to resign the command. I thank you for the confidence you felt in me."

"Which has never been shaken for a moment," interrupted the king.

"And I hope," added the general, "that he who succeeds me will serve your majesty and the country with the same zeal and devotion. I know it will be so," he continued, "for he is a Hanoverian officer."

The king held out his hand to him in silence, and without glancing at the crown prince, or the ministers, with a firm step the general left the room.

General von Tschirschnitz gnawed his white moustache in great emotion. A tear shone in his eye.

"Your majesty," he said slowly, "this is not the time

and place to examine into the reasons of those who are so careful to protect my old age from the fatigues of war. I have nothing to do but to request your majesty to allow me to resign the post of adjutant-general. Your majesty knows I have already requested permission to retire, in time of peace,—that I must do so now, when the army is marching to meet the enemy, is a deep grief to the heart of an old soldier. Perhaps the recollection of this,” and he pointed to the Waterloo medal upon his breast, “might have enabled me in spite of my age to bear the fatigues of war; but it is a law of nature that the old should give way to the young. I beg your majesty to preserve a gracious remembrance of your old adjutant-general.”

The old gentleman’s rough soldier voice failed him.

The king went quickly up to him, and spread out his arms.

“We will not say adieu, my dear Tschirschnitz,” he cried; “I hope we shall meet happily and soon, when this sad war is over, and that you will give me your valued counsels for many years.”

And he pressed the general to his heart.

“Accept the nomination of general of the infantry as a proof of my gratitude and affection,” he said in a low voice.

The general bowed in silence.

“Your majesty will permit me,” he then said, “to return to Hanover? An old invalid can do nothing against the enemy,” he added bitterly.

“Go, my dear general,” said the king; “the queen needs the advice of true servants.”

The crown prince came forward.

“I beg you to greet my mother from me,” he said affectionately.

"Farewell, your royal highness," replied the general; "you see an old servant of your father, and of your grandfather, depart. So do the old times vanish: may the future bring new men, but guard the old truth."

And the general also left the room.

The king drew a deep breath.

"So," he cried, "the worst is over. Now for the new appointments, and God grant the choice may be happy. General Brandis, will you prepare the papers?" he said, turning to the minister of war, "and see that General Arentschildt comes to me immediately to receive the command; and also Colonel Dammers, that he may at once commence the duties of adjutant-general."

Gravely and silently the general withdrew.

Count Platen approached the king, and said,—

"Count Ingelheim had just arrived when your majesty sent for me. He requests an audience."

"Let him come," cried the king with satisfaction.

Count Platen went out, and soon returned, accompanied by the ambassador of the Emperor Francis-Joseph.

Count Ingelheim was a tall, slender man of fifty-eight years of age, with short, light hair, which was changing to grey. His amiable and pleasing face was pale, and without beard or moustache. He wore black, with the star of the Order of Guelph and the Maltese cross.

"I am rejoiced, my dear count, to see you here," cried the king cheerfully. "You have not, then, shunned the tumult of war?"

"Your majesty," replied the count, "my imperial master commanded me not to leave you, and especially to accompany the army—a command in accordance with my most earnest wishes, for besides being the fortunate witness of the heroic deeds of the brave Hanoverian army, the cause here is the same as in the Austrian camp—the

cause of justice and of Austrian independence. I beg your majesty's permission to remain at head-quarters."

"With the greatest pleasure, my dear count, I offer you the hospitality of my head-quarters," cried the king. "You will, perhaps," he added, smiling, "during your military campaign, have to excuse the dinners we shall offer you, but *à la guerre comme à la guerre*. We are going to encounter great events," he continued gravely.

"They will doubtless bring great glory and enduring happiness to your majesty," said Count Ingelheim.

"Do you think we shall be able to reach South Germany?" asked the king.

"I am sure of it," replied the count, "according to all the information I have received. And I have just had a note from Count Paar who is in Cassel. The road is free, and the few Prussian troops who may be there will be unable to arrest the march of your majesty's army."

"I would the next few days were over," said the king gloomily; "the cares of the march weigh heavily upon me, and I cannot bear to think that we may be surrounded by superior forces."

"Your brave army would fight its way through if needful," cried the count. "I cannot doubt it, for I saw them on my journey here; but above all, let your majesty remember you do not stand alone; the decisive action must take place on a Saxon battle-field, and when the emperor has fought there and won, your majesty will return in triumph to your capital."

The king was silent.

"The great thing would be," he said, after a pause, "to reach Bavaria. If we succeed in this, the army is saved, and will be free to take a part in the great struggle on the fate of Germany. We must know exactly where the Bavarian army is."

"According to what I heard yesterday, the Bavarian outposts are near Eisenach and Gotha," said Count Ingelheim.

"Well, then, the union would not be difficult. But would it not be well to let the Bavarian head-quarters know where we are, and our line of march, that they may direct their operations accordingly?"

"Doubtless, your majesty," said Count Platen, "as soon as the new commander and the general staff have completely decided on our march."

"It seems to me," said the king, "that in our present circumstances we should follow the simple plan of taking the easiest and shortest line of march."

"I do not know," replied Count Platen; "to me it appears there are many different views and opinions to be considered, which may be difficult to reconcile."

"Difficult to reconcile! I do not understand why," exclaimed the king; "but," he continued, half to himself, in a melancholy voice, "I must leave that to my generals. Pray take care, Count Platen, that trustworthy and intelligent persons are sent on by the roads leading to the south, with instructions to discover if the enemy's troops are there, and in what numbers."

"At your command, your majesty."

"Are there any news from Hesse?" asked the king.

"Yes, your majesty, up to yesterday," said Count Ingelheim. "The prince had determined to remain in Cassel. The army is under the command of General Lothberg, and is concentrated at Fulda."

"We must join it there," cried the king. "United to the army of Hesse, we should form a force capable of serious resistance, and we should not easily be brought to a halt."

The groom of the chambers announced the minister of war.

"General Arentschildt and Colonel Dammers await your majesty's commands," said General Brandis; "and here are the necessary papers," he added.

"Ask the gentlemen to come in," cried the king. "My dear count, we shall meet at dinner, if I may make the request, in campaigning costume."

He held out his hand to the Austrian ambassador.

"Count Platen, I commit Count Ingelheim to your care, trusting he may find all the comforts our headquarters afford."

The two gentlemen withdrew. At the door they met the officers.

General von Arentschildt was not tall, but remarkably thin, with sharply-marked, somewhat withered features, and an enormous grey moustache, hanging completely over the mouth. He entered the room first, and was closely followed by Colonel Dammers, a man who was still young, extremely fair, with a red fresh colour, and quick energetic movements. His clear grey eyes took in everything with a sharp firm glance, and were then fixed expectantly upon the king.

They were followed by General Brandis.

"Gentlemen," said George V. gravely, and with a certain degree of proud reserve, "my minister of war has imparted to you why I have sent for you at this moment, so full of danger to myself and the country. I am persuaded that the confidence in you, so universally expressed, and of which I give so signal a proof, will be completely justified. I beg you to commence your duties without delay; and I request you, General von Arentschildt, to give us your opinion upon our further march as soon as possible."

"Your majesty," exclaimed the general, striking his hand vehemently upon his breast,—“Your majesty, I

am highly honoured by your confidence, and I will do everything an old soldier can do, to justify it. I beg your majesty——”

“What?” asked the king.

“To give me Colonel Cordemann as chief of the general staff.”

The king was silent for a moment.

“A new chief of the general staff too,” he said, half speaking to himself. “It is right,” he continued, “for you to have a chief of the staff of your own choosing. Colonel Dammers, will you prepare what is needful? and will you, General Brandis, inform General von Sichart in the most considerate manner——”

“The general has sought me already, requesting me to bid your majesty adieu for him,” replied General Brandis.

“Brave man!” cried the king. “But I will see him shortly, and take leave of him personally. And now, gentlemen, to work. Ernest, I beg you to send me the privy councillor.”

The crown prince and the officers left the room.

With a deep sigh the king leant back in his chair. He listened thoughtfully to the sounds of voices and footsteps which rose from the street below, mingled with military signals, the trampling of horses, and the trumpet calls, and he whispered to himself:

“Nec aspera terrent!”

The newly-organized general staff was installed in the aula of the university, and worked unceasingly at the mobilization of the army, and the preparations for its march.

Whilst the whole town was thus feverishly restless and active, a carriage drove quickly to the railway station.

In it sat old General von Tschirschnitz with folded arms, gazing gloomily before him.

"This, then, is the end of a long service commenced on the battle-fields of 1813, and continued through many a year of war and peace,—and now to be sent off when before the enemy,—and why? because certain young officers, ambitious climbers, wish to have the road open, and seize the opportunity of freeing themselves from the firm strict rule of old Tschirschnitz."

He took up his sword, and laid it on the opposite side of the carriage.

"Lie there," he said gloomily, "thou worthy old sword; thou art too stiff and too straight for the present generation,—they write a great deal, also they run to and fro continually,—they make plans, they proclaim orders and counter-orders, but they don't trouble themselves about the soldiers; they will not march, and they will only fight when they are obliged. But," he said with a deep breath, "the army will fight, the troops will rush at the enemy if they meet, in spite of instructions and theories—of that I am sure."

He had arrived at the railway, and as he was stepping, sabre in hand, into an empty train, about to return to Hanover for more troops, the Cambridge dragoon regiment drew up with clattering of arms in the court of the station under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Kielmansegge, who was at their head on a snorting spirited horse, and who was about to lead his regiment through the town to the villages of Harste and Gladebeck lying before Göttingen.

The old general looked from his coupé affectionately at the flashing arms of the gallant horsemen.

Then he leant back with a melancholy smile, the engine whistled, and the train rushed towards Hanover.

At the same moment the trumpet sounded, the strains of the regimental band rose in the air, the horses threw up their heads, their riders settled themselves in the saddle, the ranks closed up, and the glorious regiment rode through the city of Georgia Augusta.

In front of the fourth squadron, on a curveting horse, rode a tall handsome man, the Rittmeister von Einem,¹ and beside his troop rode Lieutenant von Wendenstein, looking fresh, and dazzling in full uniform. His eyes shone brightly, and it was evident that only duty constrained him to keep his place in the line, and restrain his spirited horse; he would rather have rushed in a wild gallop straight at the enemy. Yet a low sad strain rang in his heart when he thought of the old house in Blechow,—of the last evening amongst his family, and of the song which had so strangely affected him,—yet still this strain mingled harmoniously with the warlike fanfare of the trumpets, with the neighing of horses, and the clashing of arms,—his eyes flashed in the sunshine, and his lips smiled as he whispered the hopeful words, “Auf Wiedersehn!”

The regiment rode past the Crown Hotel; the squadrons greeted the king at the window with an echoing hurrah, then they rode out by the further gate to the villages, where the peasants gave them a hearty welcome, for the Hanoverian cavalry is always popular with the Hanoverian peasantry; how much the more now, when the brave horsemen were riding out with their king?

The fourth squadron remained in the village of Gladebeck on outpost duty.

The horses were foddered and provided with straw, according to the rules of the service and the heart of

¹ In German armies the Rittmeister holds the rank of a major.

the cavalry soldier, whose first care is always for his horse.

A cheerful fire burned in the street of the village, which stands at the foot of a hill overlooking a broad plain of meadows and orchards. Below, the lights from the village windows gleamed through the clear night, and in the distance echoing voices were heard, with signals, and trampling horse-hoofs. The dark sky glittered with stars, and the soft night-wind blew refreshingly over the fields after the heat of the day.

Upon the hill a single vedette stood motionless, a car-bineer named Schenkel.

Before the fire, upon a heap of clean well-piled straw, lay two young officers, Lieutenants von Wendenstein and Stolzenberg. The water in a campaigning kettle bubbled and steamed; brandy, lemons and great lumps of sugar were abundant, and Lieutenant von Stolzenberg, a handsome, pleasing-looking young man, prepared in two silver beakers the fragrant invigorating drink which inspired Schiller in his immortal song. Ham, bread, and sausages lay around, proving that the peasants of Gladebeck had treated their guests to all that their store-chambers could afford.

Stolzenberg mixed the beverage, tasted it, and passed the cup to his comrade after he had stirred it with a piece of wood.

"Do you believe in presentiments, Wendenstein?" he asked.

"I really scarcely know," replied that young gentleman, raising himself from the comfortable position in which he lay gazing up at the sky, to take the cup and drink a hearty draught,— "I really scarcely know, I have never thought about it; but," he added, laughing, as he placed the cup conveniently before him on the ground,

"I should like to believe, for if a presentiment is a certain indescribable feeling that penetrates us and gives us a peep into the magic mirror of the future, my future must be bright and clear; everything smiles upon me so merrily that I could gallop for miles to-night for the simple pleasure of the thing. You see, Stolzenberg," said he, drawing a cigar from his pocket and carefully cutting the end with a small knife, "it is such a pleasure to escape from that weary garrison-life, and to go into the field to a real actual war; such a night as this, old fellow, in bivouac under the open sky, is the most delightful thing a soldier can wish for. Give me a light for my cigar."

Herr von Stolzenberg gave him a glowing piece of wood, from which with the skill of a connoisseur in the art of smoking he kindled his cigar, the fine aroma of which soon rose in the air.

"Well, and what do your presentiments say, Stolzenberg?" he asked; "or rather, have you had a presentiment?"

Stolzenberg poked the fire with an oak stick and gazed thoughtfully into the blaze.

"Yes," he said gravely.

"Well," cried Wendenstein, "you say so in the tone of the marble guest; speak out and tell me all about it. Drink first and take a good draught, you know some philosopher has said presentiments come from the stomach, and for the stomach nothing is better than to be comforted in moderation with a good drink."

Herr von Stolzenberg took kindly to his friend's didactic advice, and then said, again gazing gravely at the fire,—

"Do you know I feel shy of speaking about it? It is really nothing—neither has a spirit appeared to me, nor have I had a dream, nor is there anything I can

readily describe. When I was leaving my room quite ready to mount my horse, suddenly an icy coldness passed like an electric spark through all my veins, and a voice seemed to say, 'You will never return.' The impression was so vivid and powerful that I stood still for a moment as if spell-bound. But suddenly the feeling was gone, as if it had never been."

"This is madness!" said Wendenstein leaning his head on his hand and gazing up at the stars; "I remain firm in my opinion that your stomach is out of sorts, and what more natural, after the early rising and fatigue of the day? You must double your dose of punch!"

"And once again," said Stolzenberg thoughtfully, without heeding his friend's jest, "I had the same feeling. As we passed the Crown in Göttingen and the king greeted us from the window, and all our lads hurrahed madly, just as I raised my sword to salute—in that very moment the icy coldness seized me, and again a voice cried: 'You will never return. The king will never return!'" He spoke in a low troubled voice.

"Man, you are raving!" cried Wendenstein, sitting up with a great jerk. "Have as many presentiments about yourself as you please, but leave the king out of the game. Pray oblige me by telling no one else of your hallucinations!"

Stolzenberg gazed straight before him.

"If it is to be so," he said in a low voice, "in God's name it is well; if we come to blows many a brave soldier will fall, and it is our lot; a quick honourable death is all a man can wish, only no long suffering, nor to return a cripple."

"I will answer you no more," said von Wendenstein, "such thoughts are too dismal for a first night in the

field. But," he continued sitting up and looking into his friend's face, "I will confide something to you."

And half jesting, half smiling at some happy remembrance, he said,—

"I think I am in love."

"You?" cried von Stolzenberg, laughing, "it would not be for the first time; but the moment is ill-chosen."

"Why?"

"Because a good cavalry soldier when he goes into the field should leave no regrets behind him. Forwards! is the word, and a lover makes a bad soldier."

"I do not understand that," said von Wendenstein; "on the contrary, in battle, how happy it would make a man to feel a heart is beating for him, and following him with thoughts and good wishes, and if he distinguishes himself the brave soldier will feel greater pride, and then when he returns, oh! that must be delicious!"

"When he returns," said Stolzenberg gloomily. "But," he continued in a cheerful voice, "who is your new flame?"

The eyes which von Wendenstein had been directing towards the stars were turned upon his friend with a look of surprise, and he said in a somewhat hurt voice, as he threw himself back in the straw:

"New flame? what an expression! certainly I shall not tell her name!"

"Then you are really in earnest," returned von Stolzenberg. "And now I must prescribe an extra glass of punch; for I retain my opinion that love is a sickness, especially at the beginning of a campaign."

Wendenstein did not reply, but continued attentively to watch the course of the stars, which at the same moment were shining down on the old house at Blechow, upon the old trees and the well-known pastures and fir-

woods, and upon the Pfarrhaus with its beds of roses, and he hummed to himself:

“Wenn Menschen auseinander gehn,
So sagen sie: Auf Wiedersehn!”

“Halt! who goes there?” cried the sentry on the hill, and presented his carbine.

Both the young officers sprang to their feet. A carriage and two extra post-horses, coming rapidly along the road, drew up at the challenge of the sentry.

In a moment the officers were at the carriage door. Some dragoons appeared a little way off.

“Whom have we here?” asked Herr von Stolzenberg, looking into the carriage, in which sat a figure wrapped in a cloak. “You cannot pass the outposts.”

A young man with a fresh open countenance threw back his cloak and leaned over the door to greet the officers.

“Everything is quite in order, gentlemen,” he said, laughing. “I am Duve of the Chancery, and I am sent by Count Platen and General Arentschildt with a despatch from Count Ingelheim to Baron Kübeck at Frankfort; I am also to seek the Hessian army and to bring back intelligence which may enable you to join it. Here are my despatches, and here is the order for passing the outposts.”

Lieutenant von Stolzenberg stepped with the pass to the light of the fire, read it, and returned it to Herr Duve.

“It is quite right,” he then said. “I wish you a pleasant journey and good success; send us the Hessians soon, and if possible the Bavarians also.”

“I will do what I can,” returned the messenger.

“Stolzenberg,” cried von Wendenstein, “bring a glass of punch. Here, sir,” he said, “take this away

in your stomach, it will do you good in the night; who knows when you will meet with it again?"

"To your good watch," said Herr Duve, as he emptied the proffered beaker.

The horses started, the carriage rolled on, and the officers returned to their fire.

After a short time the sentry again challenged; steps were heard on the other side of the hill, the pass-word was given, and the officers, who had hastily sprung to their feet, met Rittmeister von Einem.

The lieutenants saluted, and von Stolzenberg said: "Nothing fresh, a messenger has passed with despatches and a correct pass."

"All right, gentlemen," said the Rittmeister, "all is in perfect order. And now," he continued, laughingly, "let us lay aside duty; and give me a glass of your drink, and something to eat, for I have had so much to do to-day with the horses and men that I have not had time to find anything for myself."

The young officers hastened to get him such supper as their simple but plentiful provisions afforded, and to brew him as good and fragrant a glass of punch as he could have met with in the most comfortable dining-room.

"Yes," said von Einem, as, stretched at his ease on the straw, he lighted his cigar, "it is all very comfortable to begin with; but, by and by, when we have no more punch to drink, and no more cigars to smoke!"

"So much the better," cried von Wendenstein cheerfully; "our pluck will then be put to the test. But, Herr Rittmeister, shall we march soon? A messenger has just passed to the Hessian army. I suppose that to unite we must march. The Hessians will not come back here."

"If we shall march," said the Rittmeister, sighing,

"I know nothing about it; but it does not look like it. The general staff sits and works, and writes, and re-writes; but when we shall march, I do not know."

"I am very sorry about General von Tschirschnitz," said Herr von Stolzenberg. "He was a strict old gentleman, and woe betide anyone who tried to play tricks with him. But he was of the good old stamp; why has he been sent off?"

"Count Kielmansegge, who was with me a quarter of an hour ago," said the Rittmeister, "tells me the army no longer feels any confidence in his capabilities."

"Well, I have heard for some time past that he was breaking," remarked Wendenstein; "but one could not perceive it, if one had anything to do with him. What is Colonel Dammers like—the new adjutant-general?"

"I know him but very little. I believe he is an energetic man. But we have nothing to do with all these things. The cavalry should hold to the old rule—to go in at the enemy and beat him or fall!" And he took a good draught from his glass.

"God grant that the new brooms may sweep clean, and that we may soon go forwards."

He stood up.

"Good night, and a good watch, gentlemen; we shall meet to-morrow, and I hope we shall march!"

The officers saluted, and the Rittmeister slowly walked back to the village through the dark night. The two lieutenants determined to sleep an hour each alternately through the night, whilst the other watched. So midnight passed, and all was silence at the outposts, whilst new troops poured into Göttingen, reserves and recruits streaming in from every part of the country; for all the young men desired to be enrolled in the army.

The new general staff worked all night long; much

was debated and written in the great aula of Georgia Augusta, and at last it was decided that the army must remain four days longer in Göttingen, in order to prepare for the march.

Four days is a long time when events may be counted by hours.

END OF VOL. I.

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